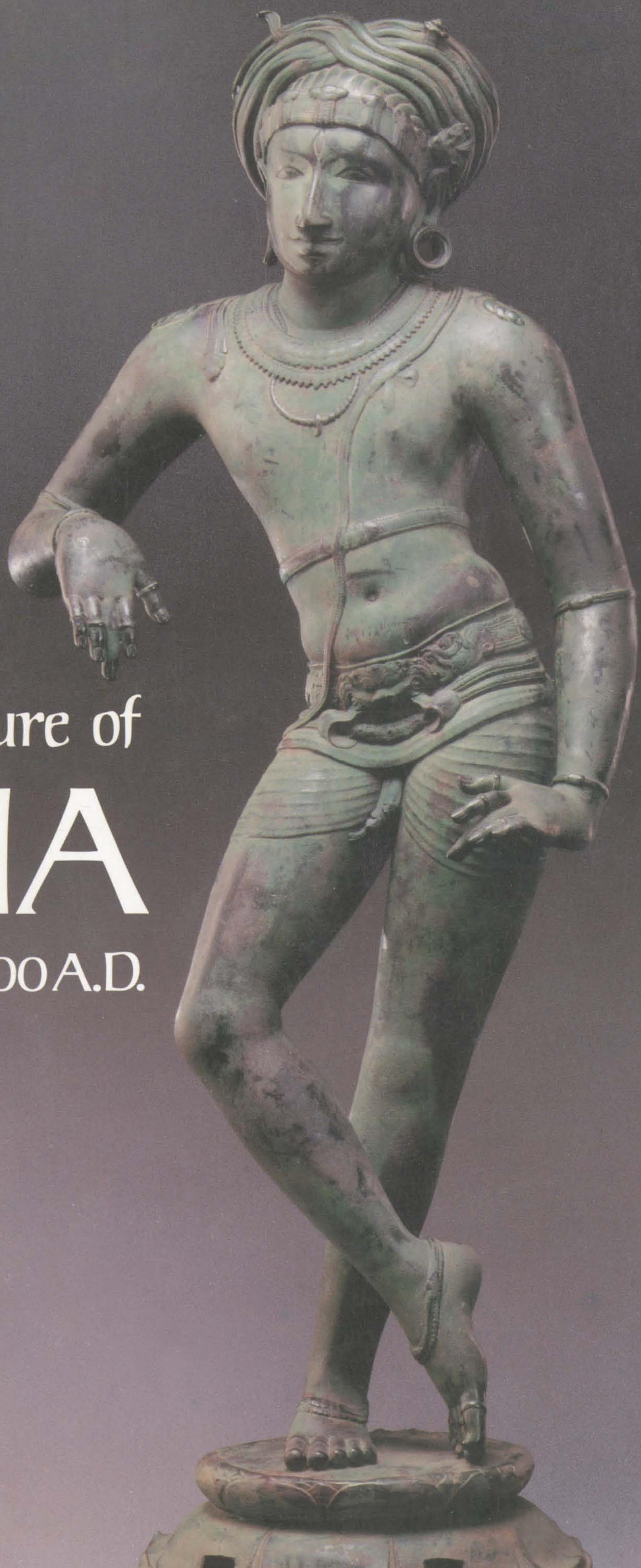
The Sculpture of
INDIA
3000 B.C.–1300 A.D.



The Sculpture of INDIA





National Gallery of Art, Washington

The Sculpture of INDIA 3000 B.C.–1300 A.D.

PRAMOD CHANDRA



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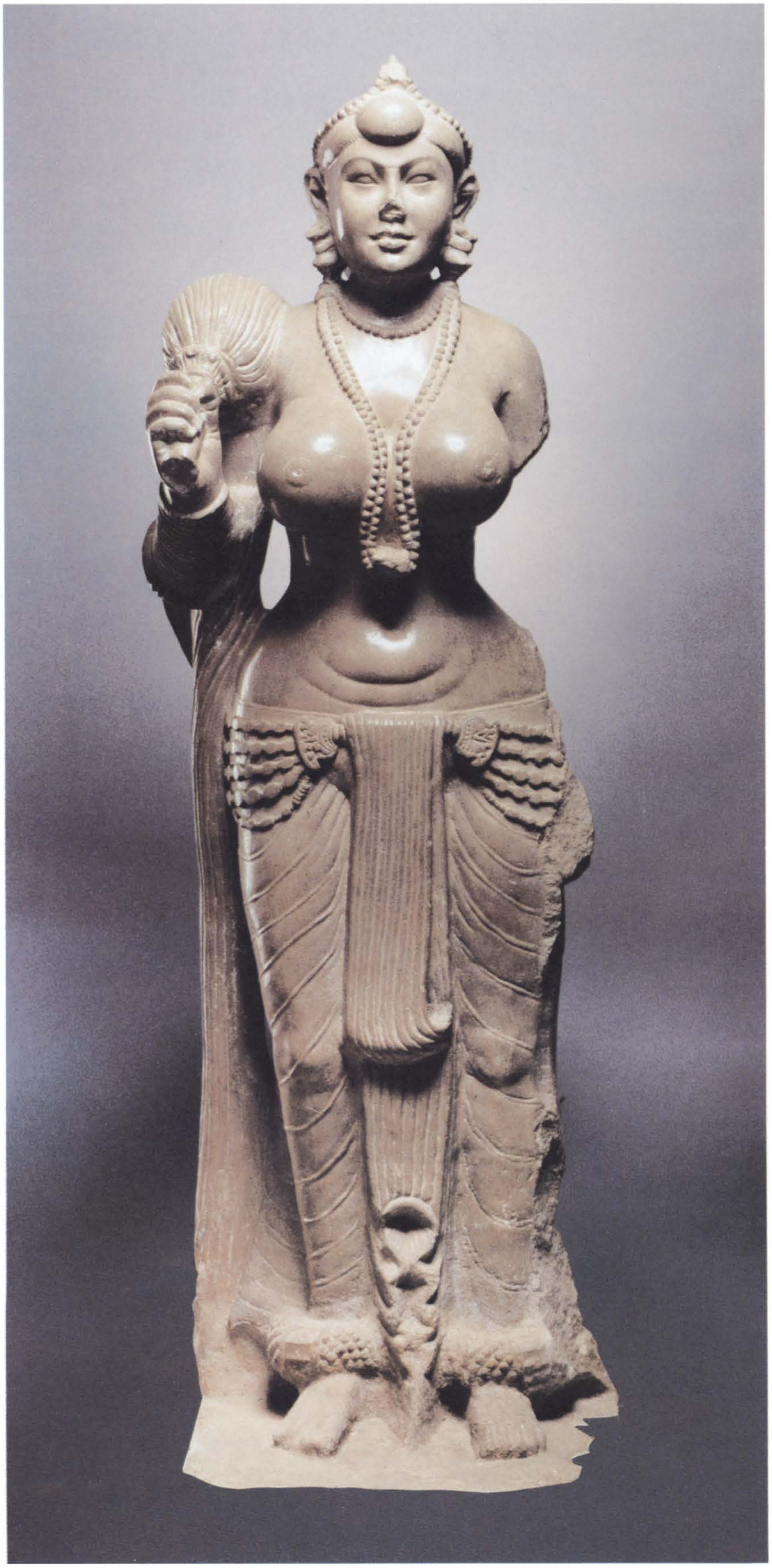
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Thomas J. Pritzker, Chicago: cat. no. 82
Charles Ritchie, Washington, D.C.: fig. 80a and drawings for the glossary

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cat. no. 4.
Goddess Holding a Fly Whisk

Foreword

ALTHOUGH WE in the West are familiar with the expectation that throughout history great cultures have made great sculpture, India's eloquent witness to this precept and its greatest achievements in the realm of sculpture remain relatively unfamiliar and inaccessible to the American public. In the four millennia spanned by this exhibition we encounter a consistent technical brilliance, a compelling aesthetic sensibility, and an unsurpassed recognition of the spiritual dimension.

Appreciation in the West of this great tradition has come slowly. As recently as 1864 a British archaeology professor felt it appropriate to write: "There is no temptation to dwell at length on the sculpture of Hindustan. It affords no assistance in tracing the history of art, and its debased quality deprives it of all interest as a phase of fine art." The foundations of the exhibition detailed by this catalogue could not be more distanced conceptually from that nineteenth-century attitude. The basis of selection of these works has been largely to show how wrong such perceptions were. We have assembled some one hundred pieces in an effort to clarify and focus the achievement of India's artistic tradition. This tradition is above all a sacred one, and it must be kept in mind that in both Hindu and Buddhist texts there are declarations that the making of images leads to heaven. These intentionally repetitive images fulfill their spiritual goals by expressing, through multiple forms, the unknowable qualities of the divinities they represent.

An exhibition of such important objects is, from the beginning, a most ambitious project and one that we have dared to undertake because of the enthusiasm we share with our Indian colleagues. They have been as eager to give assistance and support as we have been enthusiastic to receive it. Our mutual goal has been to make this exhibition a fitting inauguration for the Festival of India in the United States. This unparalleled cultural program comprises dozens of events from and about India and is being held throughout the country in 1985 and 1986. Plans for the Festival were first confirmed during the July 1982 visit of the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi with President Reagan. It was determined early on that a key component of the Festival should be a survey of the entire art history of India. Beginning with *The Sculpture of India: 3000 B.C.-1300 A.D.*, the survey proceeds through the Metropolitan Museum of Art's exhibition, *India!*, which addresses the fourteenth to the nineteenth centuries, to contemporary manifestations such as the Smithsonian's *Aditi* show and its exhibition of photographs by Rosalind Solomon, depicting the religious and ceremonial life of modern India.

A legion of devoted individuals has made this exhibition work and some of them are acknowledged below. But there is one who must be set apart and that is Mrs. Pupul Jayakar, the Chairman of the Indian Advisory Committee for the Festival of India. Without her it is impossible to speculate how this project would have been completed. We are also most grateful to her hard-working colleagues at the Festival of India office in New Delhi, Mr. S. K. Mishra, Director-General, and Mr. Vijay Singh, Coordinator. Also, we received invaluable assistance for the coordination and approval of loans from Dr. Laxmi P. Sihare, Director of the National Museum, New Delhi, and Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan, Additional Secretary, Department of Culture, Government of India.

We would particularly like to thank the two ambassadors personally concerned with the exhibition: K. Shankar Bajpai, the ambassador of India to the United States, and Harry G. Barnes, Jr., United States ambassador to India, and their able staffs. Mr. Niranjan N. Desai, Festival of India Coordinator at the embassy in Washington, has assisted communication between our two countries. We should also like to acknowledge the coöperative interest shown by the Indo-U.S. Subcommission, and its executive director in America, Ted M. G. Tanen. The interest and help provided by Mr. and Mrs. Thomas J. Pritzker throughout has been tremendously appreciated.

The Indian Government expedited our labors by indemnifying those objects lent from Indian collections. Air India provided essential transportation for both objects and personnel. The exhibition received the support of the Hinduja Foundation courtesy of S. P. and G. P. Hinduja.

Further support was generously made available by the following: Boeing Company, The Coca-Cola Foundation, The General Foods Fund, ITT Corporation, Lockheed Corporation, Roland International Corporation, Varian Associates, and Wyeth Laboratories.

Finally, we wish to express our thanks to all those on the staff of the National Gallery of Art who organized this exhibition and produced this catalogue, and to Pramod Chandra, The George P. Bickford Professor of Indian Art, Harvärd University, who has been the guest curator for the exhibition. His vision, knowledge, and tireless research have been crucial to the realization of this undertaking.

J. CARTER BROWN
Director
National Gallery of Art

Lenders to the Exhibition



cat. no. 25. *Śiva as Half-Man and Half-Woman (Śiva Ardhanārīśvara)*

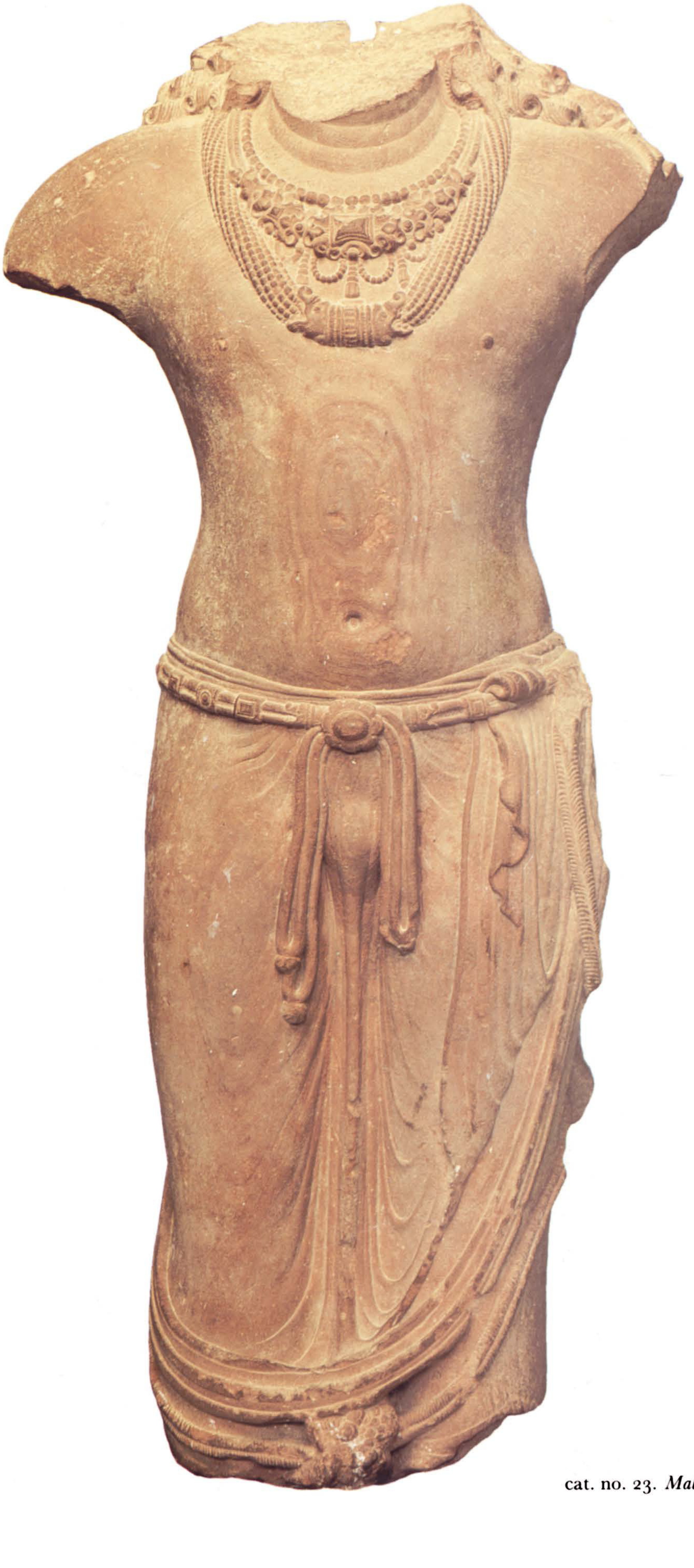
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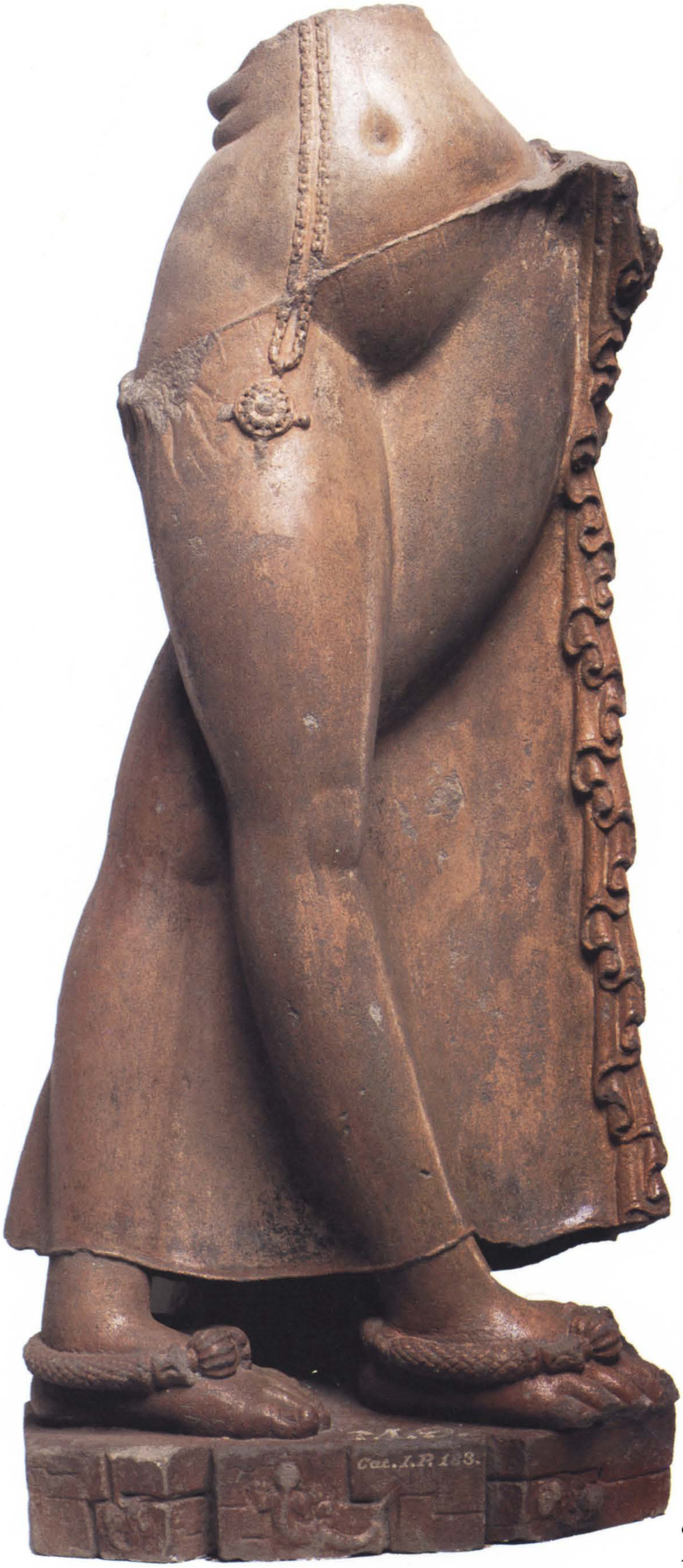
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cat. no. 6. *A Dwarf Yakṣa by the Artist Kaṇhadāsa*
left page: cat. no. 9. *Yakṣī with Fanlike Hair*



cat. no. 23. *Male Torso*



cat. no. 26.
A Woman Startled by a Scorpion



Introduction

Western Notions of Indian Sculpture

THAT INDIA HAD AN ancient tradition of sculpture has been known to the Western world since at least the thirteenth century, yet no real understanding or appreciation of the works themselves existed until the nineteenth century. Up to that time, it was commonly believed that Indian sculpture depicted a frightful demonology peopled with monsters as strange and bizarre as the religions they represented. Evidence for this misguided notion was chiefly drawn from a few garbled accounts by gullible travelers, and reinforced by fantastic books illustrating the marvels of the world, until eventually the idea took firm hold and assumed a life of its own. The stereotype persisted through the centuries, creating an entirely negative view of the idea of Indian art in the Western imagination, the development of which can easily be documented. A theoretical, a priori dislike for Indian sculpture thus became ingrained in the intellectual circles that bothered to concern themselves with the subject (see Mitter 1977, for a discussion of these ideas). In the 1820s, during a series of lectures that formed the basis of his *Aesthetik,* the philosopher Georg Hegel (1770-1831), who in all likelihood had hardly seen any Indian sculpture, referred to it as the irrational forms of a fermenting fantasy. This was quite the opposite of Greek art, in which, according to him, the perfect balance of form and meaning was always apparent (Osmaston 1920).

While Hegel was philosophizing on the nature of Indian sculpture, practical undertakings of a very different order were being carried out in India. The systematic study of Indian antiquity through objects recovered in archaeological exploration conducted by Europeans, principally the British, would gradually alter the basis of our understanding of Indian art; but in the nineteenth century, a hostile intellectual environment stood in the way of unprejudiced aesthetic

left page: cat. no. 71. *Gaṇeśa*

fig. 1. Colossal bull, from Lepakshi, Andhra Pradesh, sixteenth century A.D. This is the kind of sculpture condemned by Ruskin.

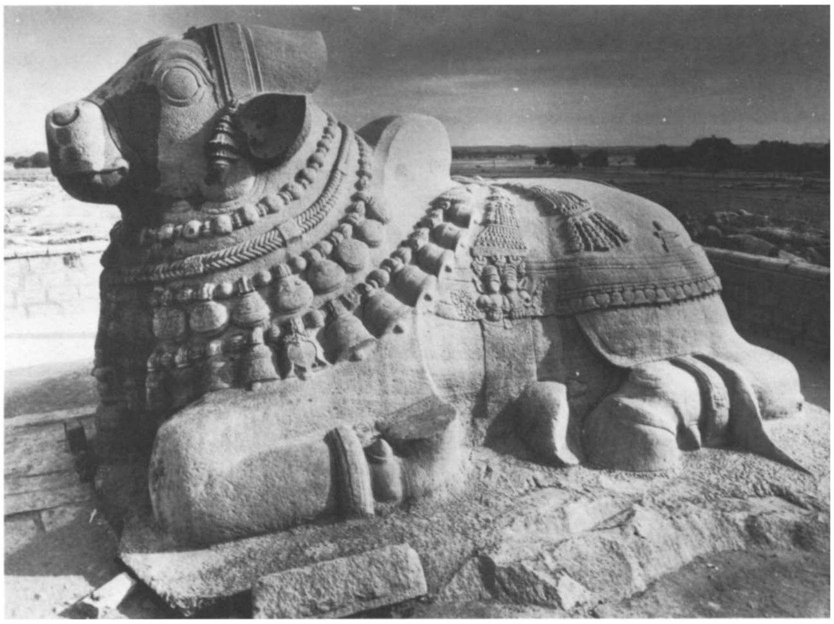




fig. 2. The visit of the sage Asita to Śuddhodana, the Buddha's father. Railing pillar from Amaravati, Andhra Pradesh, first–second century A.D. National Museum, New Delhi.

appreciation and impeded it for quite a long while. The love of Greek art, based upon a greater familiarity with actual works, reached its height during this period, and perhaps diverted attention from Asian art, particularly that of India, which was constantly denigrated. The influential critic John Ruskin (1811-1900) denounced Indian art as "the archetype of bad art of all the earth" (Ruskin 1872, 200) (fig. 1). Comments of this sort were hardly uncommon even by those who had intimate acquaintance with the works themselves. Thus the remarkable James Fergusson, a pioneering and perceptive student of Indian art whose entire work was deeply rooted in objects, was greatly enthused about the sculpture of Amaravati (fig. 2 and cat. no. 19), but was at a loss to explain its excellence except through the intervention of some kind of Greek influence (Fergusson 1873, 169ff.) The same opinion can be found in the writings of the indefatigable Alexander Cunningham, to whom the finest Indian sculpture was significant only to the extent that it resembled specimens of Greek art (Cunningham 1854, 125-26). James Burgess, another important early scholar who worked with unswerving industry, could only state that "high art has never been with the Hindu, as with the Hellenic race, a felt necessity for the representation of their divinities" (Burgess 1870, 9).

In spite of their laborious efforts, it is clear that Western scholars of this era were unable to break free from the long

negative tradition of viewing Indian art, the cultural parochialism of their time, and an imperialistic outlook that regarded conquered peoples, however ancient their civilization, as inferior in every aspect of human endeavor. They held sculpture in particularly low regard, though sometimes a word of praise does appear: witness Fergusson's astute remarks about Bharhut (see fig. 8), whose figures "though very different from our own standards of beauty and grace, are truthful to nature, and where grouped together, combine to express the action intended with singular felicity" (Fergusson 1876, 36). But for the most part it was the same tiresome refrain, whose roots had extended as far back at least as the thirteenth century. If Indian sculpture was of any use to nineteenth-century scholars, it was purely to illustrate the myths and manners of ancient Hindus, an approach not so surprising, for it permitted these scholars to bypass the whole question of the aesthetics of Indian art, sometimes leading to comical results. Alexander Cunningham's Victorian sensibilities were thrown into considerable confusion by the voluptuous beauty of the Bhutesar Yakṣīs (see cat. no. 10); after hemming and hawing about the possibility of the figures being prostitutes of a dissolute time, he came to the circumspect conclusion that "at least certain classes of women in ancient India must have been in the habit of appearing in public almost naked" (Cunningham 1873, 23-25).



fig. 3. Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy (1877-1947).

Strengthened by the discovery during the nineteenth century of Gandhāra sculpture in the northwestern part of the Indian subcontinent, which ultimately exhibited Greek affiliations, the Hellenocentric attitude continued well into the twentieth century before fading into obscurity (see cat. nos. 17 and 18). One of the causes of its demise was a fundamental change in Western intellectual attitudes, which led to a greater appreciation of non-Western and primitive art. Another was the rise of modern art, which further altered artistic perception. Modern artists, notably Rodin, were moved by the inherent beauty of Indian sculpture and praised it in sensitive language (Rodin et al., 1921). With this kind of formal appreciation, Indian art was gradually disassociated from the wild assessments of the moral state of Hindus. Furthermore, an increased receptivity to the spirit of Indian religion occasioned a second and more serious investigation of its arts. Led by the great art historian Ananda Coomaraswamy (1877-1947, fig. 3), a new generation of

scholars, approaching Indian art on its own terms, was soon able to controvert longstanding prejudices of the past, so that the study of these works gradually became acceptable. The heated controversies of yesteryear are now mostly matters of history. Arguments about the relative superiority of European and Indian art, which too often tell us more about those who argue than about the art itself, have, in scholarly circles at least, greatly diminished. Indian sculpture, an expression of the Indian creative genius, is now better understood and, by many, as greatly appreciated as are the arts of any other period or region.

The general adoption of a more open attitude first became evident with the important exhibition of the art of India and Pakistan at Burlington House, London, in the winter of 1947-48. This event marked the independence of India from British rule, but it also signaled the beginning of the freedom of Indian art from its history of past prejudices. This is obvious in the reception accorded to the exhibition both by critics from the press and by scholars of art. The display of sculpture, the grandest assemblage ever held outside India, made it difficult not to "concentrate on the thing itself." Faced with the actual objects, age-old fantasies dissolved. If it is true that "Indian art was not appreciated in the West because it was not seen at its best" (London 1949, 3, 6; in introduction by K. de B. Codrington), the London exhibition represented a substantial change.

Aims and Organization of the Exhibition

In the years following the London exhibition of 1947-48, steady progress has been made in the understanding of Indian art. One result of this is the growing number of collections, particularly in American museums, and the several loan exhibitions held throughout the world, but principally in Europe, America, and Japan. Some of these have had a fairly specific focus of interest, illuminating a particular period or a special aspect of Indian religious or cultural life. This exhibition has no such intention, its purpose being to convey a sense of the contribution of Indian sculpture to the common artistic heritage of mankind, perhaps reinforcing the progress made in this direction through the several smaller exhibitions that have been held in this country following the exhibit in London at Burlington House. The

objects chosen range from the middle of the third millennium B.C. to approximately the fourteenth century A.D., when vigorous foreign influence from Iran and central Asia gave much of the Indian art that followed a character that distinguished it—but did not divide it—from what had passed before. All of south India, for example, retains the ancient traditions in relative purity even in modern times.

A deliberate attempt has been made in this exhibition to give the viewer an impression of Indian sculpture as a whole, in all the rich diversity of idioms that flourished in the ancient regions of the country. Within a broad stylistic framework, which at any given time stretched across vast regions, a wealth of distinctive local characteristics contributed to its surpassing excellence. Side by side with works of grand conception and majestic power are those cast in more intimate modes, both lyrical and delicate (see cat. no. 36). Together with images of absorbing spirituality are those of innocent sensuousness (see cat. nos. 11 and 28); in mood they range from the beatific to the erotic and horrific (see cat. no. 47); in size, from the colossal to the miniature. The finest pieces often display a whole range of these qualities, and the unity of the sculptor's vision is not disrupted by the great variances in scale. The forms range from the early rendering of smooth volumes expanding outward from an inner core (see cat. no. 4) to the complexity of sharp planes filled with tension (see cat. no. 86). The completely naturalistic or the totally abstract could conceivably be found in these works, but the best of Indian sculpture combines both of these qualities.

In addition to selecting famous masterpieces that embody the essential elements of Indian sculpture (see cat. no. 4), an effort has been made to identify and present hidden treasures chosen from a vast corpus of works scattered throughout India (see cat. nos. 5, 43, 49, 72, 92). Examples of ornament have also been included so as to suggest the intimate relationship it enjoys with architecture and sculpture (see cat. nos. 38, 56, 65, 72).

The arrangement of the catalogue corresponds to that of the exhibition. The period covered has been divided broadly as follows:

1. the protohistoric period (c. 3000-1500 B.C.)
2. the third century B.C.
3. the second and first centuries B.C.

4. the first through the third century A.D.
5. the fourth through the sixth century A.D.
6. the seventh century onward

These periods correspond to what are often called (1) the Indus valley civilization, (2) the Maurya period, (3) the Śuṅga/Sātavāhana period, (4) the Kuṣāṇa period, (5) the Gupta period, and (6) the medieval period. The classification employed here avoids dynastic appellations (Maurya, Gupta, etc.), which, in my opinion, have outlived, for the most part, whatever usefulness they once may have had. Except in very rare instances, there is little evidence that political dynasties played a leading role in the production of works of art, which is quite the opposite of what the older nomenclature suggests. In any case, our knowledge of dynastic history is often scant, so that the extent of the areas ruled and the precise chronology of reigns remain quite uncertain. The communal classification of Indian art into Hindu, Buddhist, and Jaina is quite unacceptable, for it falsely implies an essential difference between the art produced for each of these religions. Whether architect, sculptor, or painter, the same Indian artist created works for patrons of any religious persuasion. Although concessions were made to appropriate iconography and ritual need, from an artistic point of view, no stylistic distinctions can be discerned, except those resulting from the date and place of execution.

Indeed, time and place are the elements that determine the character of a work of Indian art, its style being conditioned chiefly by the individual traditions of the area in which it was produced. Again, the fact that the past lives on in modern India, where the present-day states are, with some adjustments, representatives of ancient provinces or cognate groups of provinces, is justification for choosing works of art from as many states as possible.

Divisions of Indian art by time are determined by a stylistic unity evident within each period, a unity that extends beyond the separate regions to encompass all of India. The broad periods adopted here reflect the present state of knowledge and will be narrowed and refined with further study, for despite the labors of about 150 years, much of even such basic work remains to be done. This is especially true of the art produced from the seventh century onward, loosely termed medieval, whose traditions continue today in parts of India. The works produced during this period are

divided by geographic location, as the development and style of the objects from the north follow a fairly distinct course from those of the south. The largest number of surviving sculptures dates from this period, and this is reflected in the composition of the exhibition. Still, because much of this material has not been studied with the intensity devoted to earlier art, it has yet to receive its due. An effort is made here to correct this deficiency by presenting some magnificent images from this exceptionally productive era.



fig. 4. Bull capital, from Rampurwa, Bihar, mid-third century B.C. Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi.

Sculpture in the Exhibition

1. *The protohistoric period* (cat. nos. 1-3)

UNTIL THE 1920s, the earliest antiquarian remains known from India were those of the Maurya period (fig. 4 and cat. no. 4), datable to approximately the third century B.C. Literary sources allowed scholars to speculate about an Āryan invasion and settlement of northern India at least a thousand years earlier, but little artistic or archaeological evidence existed to document this hypothesis.

There were a few curious antiquities in the form of seals (see cat. no. 2) that presented intriguing clues to an earlier civilization. And since at least one of them was known to come from Harappa, a town along the ancient course of the Indus River, the mounds there were excavated in the early 1920s. It was soon obvious that the disturbed site, together with that of Mohenjo-daro, a place further down the Indus, represented two urban centers of a culture that flourished in the Indian subcontinent from about the third millennium B.C. These great cities of the Harappan culture had a carefully planned system of streets and drains in addition to comfortable brick houses (fig. 5). The unexpected discovery



fig. 5. Junction of two streets, mud-brick houses, and defense wall. Kalibangan, Rajasthan, mid-third millennium B.C.

fig. 7. Copper weapons from various sites, c. 1000 B.C. National Museum, New Delhi.

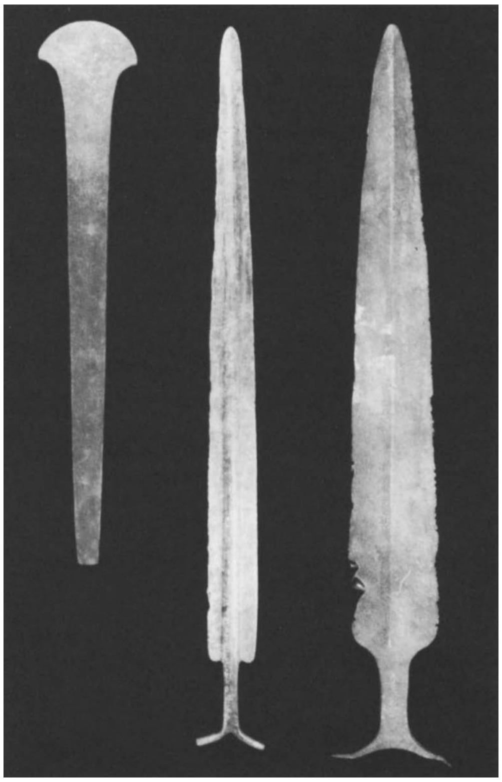




fig. 6. Torso, from Harappa, mid-third millennium B.C. National Museum, New Delhi.

of these ancient cities radically transformed our knowledge of the origins of civilization in south Asia.

Recent excavations have extended the geographical range of this Harappan culture, as it is technically known, far beyond the initial domain of the alluvial Indus valley. In addition to sites in Sind and the Punjab, others have been found in the states of Gujarat, Rajasthan, and places as far afield as Alamgirpur, in the vicinity of Delhi, and Daimabad, barely eighty miles from Bombay. The chronological horizon has also been clarified, with the mature phase of the culture being dated to the second half of the third millennium B.C. (2500-2000), and a later phase extending to the middle of the second millennium B.C. (1500).

The history of Indian art begins with a group of superb pieces, very small in number, each no more than a few inches high, from sites of the Harappan culture, or the Indus valley civilization as it is popularly called, which are datable to approximately the second half of the third millennium B.C. (see cat. nos. 1-3). We do not know what experience with sculpture preceded the making of these objects, which are at once assured and mature, but their sophisticated handling of form implies that they were the result of a tradition of some duration. In several pieces we also notice the

same emphatic plasticity that is a basic characteristic of later Indian sculpture, though connections between the two are obscure (fig. 6). For the present, it has to be admitted that there is a vast and largely unfilled gap in the history of Indian sculpture between the disappearance of the Harappan culture and the evidence of sculpture once again in approximately the third century B.C. The bronzes from Daimabad (see cat. no. 3) narrow this gap, and the superb weapons produced for the so-called copper hoard culture (c. 1000 B.C., fig. 7) attest at least to a continuity of technical skill. Sculpture of the Harappan cultures is, at most, a prelude to the art of a later age, anticipating its character but not leading up to it in any clearly demonstrable way.

2. *The third century B.C.* (cat. no. 4)

THE CIRCUMSTANCES that brought about the end of the Harappan culture sometime in the second millennium B.C., which may be the age in which the *Vedas,* the most sacred text of the Hindus, were first recited, remain the subject of much speculation. Archaeology has shown, however, that the civilization was succeeded by a number of essentially rural cultures. A second phase of urbanization occurred around the sixth century B.C., when cities began to emerge once again all over India, most conspicuously in the Gangetic valley. This age of great social and cultural ferment witnessed the life of the historical Buddha (fifth century B.C.) and the rise of Buddhism. Political struggles among the city-states finally led to the establishment of the Maurya empire (c. 321-185 B.C.), which encompassed almost the entire subcontinent.

Following the few objects remaining to us from the Harappan or protohistoric period, the next extant works of sculpture appear to be associated largely with the Maurya dynasty, particularly with the reign of the emperor Asoka (r. 268-231 B.C.), leaving art historians with a gap of several centuries to contemplate, in as much as the same years seem to have been full of activity in other spheres, and rendering the Maurya era, for lack of a complete picture, one of those few times in which artistic production seems to be linked directly to a dynasty or a king. These works, again small in number, consist principally of animal capitals (see fig. 4) placed on columns and a few images of popular divinities



fig. 8. Section of a railing with a Yakṣī, from Bharhut, Madhya Pradesh, mid-second century B.C. Indian Museum, Calcutta.

(see cat. no. 4). As in the Harappan sculpture, the remarkable maturity of the work, which appears suddenly and without any hint of artistic context, is astonishing, quite the opposite of what one would expect at an early stage of development. A previous tradition of sculpture in perishable materials such as wood or clay has been proposed in explanation for this unusual circumstance; foreign influence has also been posited, and some connection with work at Persepolis in Iran is evident. Nevertheless, it is clear that whatever was borrowed was quickly transformed by the infusion of a plastic style characteristic of Indian sculpture. In particular, the voluminous rendering of the Rampurwa bull (see fig. 4) and the Didarganj Yakṣī (see cat. no. 4) are far removed from anything produced earlier in Iran.

3. *The second and first centuries B.C.* (cat. nos. 5-7)

THE NEXT PERIOD OF Indian art, which extends roughly over the first two centuries B.C., is best represented by a section of the railing surrounding the famous stupa of Bharhut (fig. 8). Not more than a hundred years separate this work from that of the preceding period (see cat. no. 4), but the differences are startling. Rather than moving to an even more accomplished realization of volume, which may have seemed hardly possible, the sculptors took the opposite direction, producing highly abstract forms that stressed both flat and cubic shapes. The outlines are sharp and angular, the surface hard, and the ornament precise and detailed. The loosely joined parts of the body give the figures a puppetlike character. Instead of being established on the ground, the somewhat weightless figures seem to float above it. These nonnaturalistic features, together with the emotionless, masklike faces, result in a certain unearthly, hieratic beauty unique to this style.

With Bharhut, too, we see the beginning of narrative relief sculpture, which was greatly favored by artists of this period and culminated in the superb Amaravati masterpieces of the next (see fig. 2 and cat. no. 19). We also find stated here for the first time, and with comprehensive authority, the ornamental vocabulary of Indian art of all subsequent periods. From this point of view, it is possible to think of the style of the second century B.C. as a new beginning in Indian sculpture.

Much of the ornamental imagery is related to the Water Cosmology, a belief in which all creation arises from the water and "all this world is woven warp and woof on water" (Hume 1949, 113). This is expressed in various motifs, notably the lotus; flowers and foliage overflowing from a jar of water; trees and vegetation in which sap, the essence of water, flows; and creatures, such as fish, crocodilian *makaras,* elephants, snakes, and other marine animals, that live in or near water. Whatever evokes the productive or the source of life is held sacred, auspicious, and conducive to well-being, and by that token, is considered beautiful as well. It is this belief that accounts for the representation of the amorous couple, the source of human life, in every period of Indian art. Divinities like the Nāga or serpent, and Yakṣas and Yakṣīs, who preside over and are identified with the productive powers of nature, also owe their popularity and frequent representation to this basic belief (see Coomaraswamy 1928-31, for the penetrating analysis of the origins and meaning of Indian ornament on which these comments are based).

Typified by the work at Bharhut, this new style appears not only at that site, but throughout most of India, including the cave temples of Orissa in the east and Maharashtra in the west. Found at Mathura, Sarnath, Sanchi, distant Amaravati in Andhra Pradesh, and at other centers, the style displays local features at each of these sites. This exhibition presents a particularly superb example from Amaravati (see cat. no. 5), whose more relaxed surfaces embrace the same cubic forms as those at Bharhut, but with a rendering more modeled than carved. And already we find in this region the origin of a style emphasizing movement and surface animation, which later achieves full expression in the first through the third century A.D. (see fig. 2 and cat. no. 19).

The style of the mid-second century B.C. did not last for too long, the nature of the next development indicated by the sculpture adorning the gates of the Great Stupa (Stupa I) at Sanchi (fig. 9). Like the railing at Bharhut, these four gates are covered with sculpture, including narrative reliefs of Buddhist legends, the same complement of motifs drawn from the Water Cosmology, and above all, a series of lovely figures of Yakṣīs in association with trees serving as fanciful brackets of the lowermost architraves (fig. 10). One of these figures (see cat. no. 7) gives us a clear idea of sculpture at the site. However, unlike Bharhut, here there is a joyous exploitation of mass and volume; the forms are much fuller,

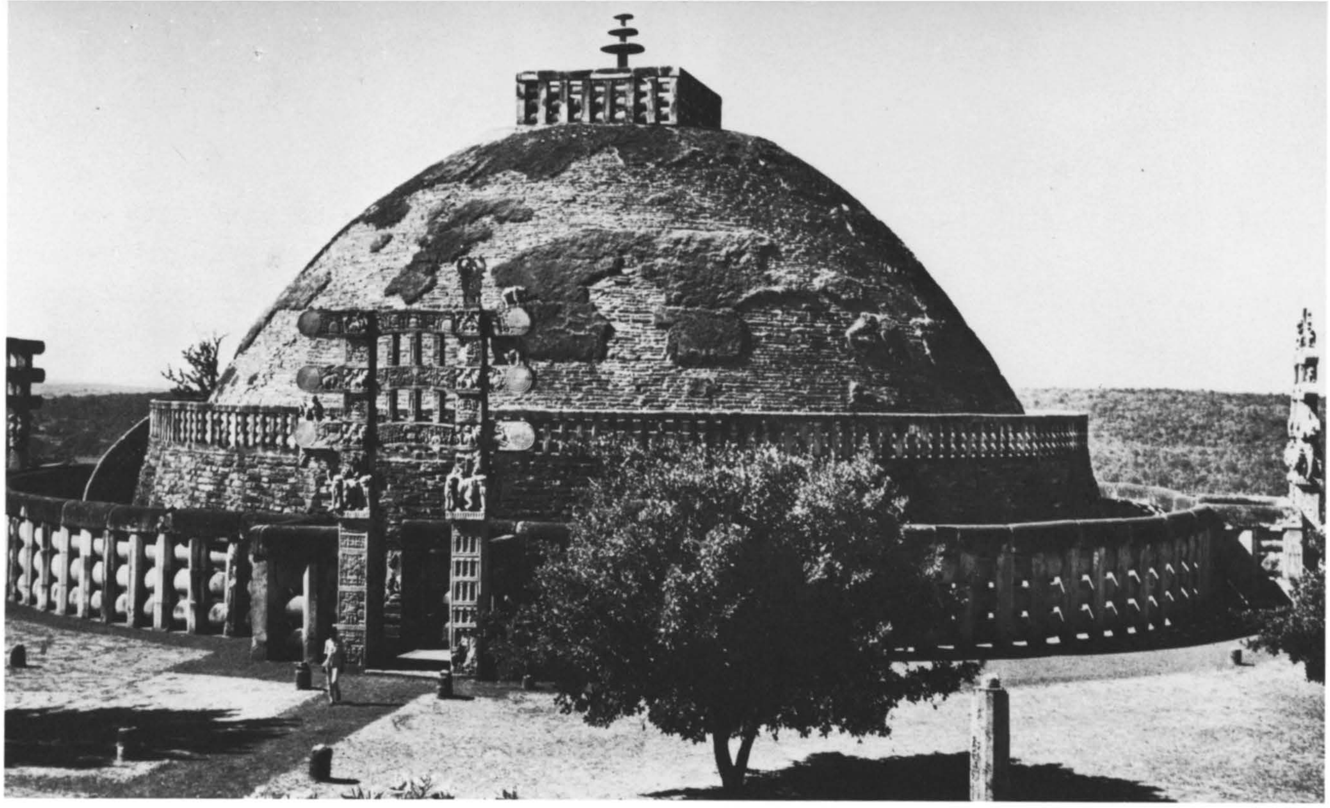


fig. 9. The Great Stupa at Sanchi, Madhya Pradesh, third–first century B.C.

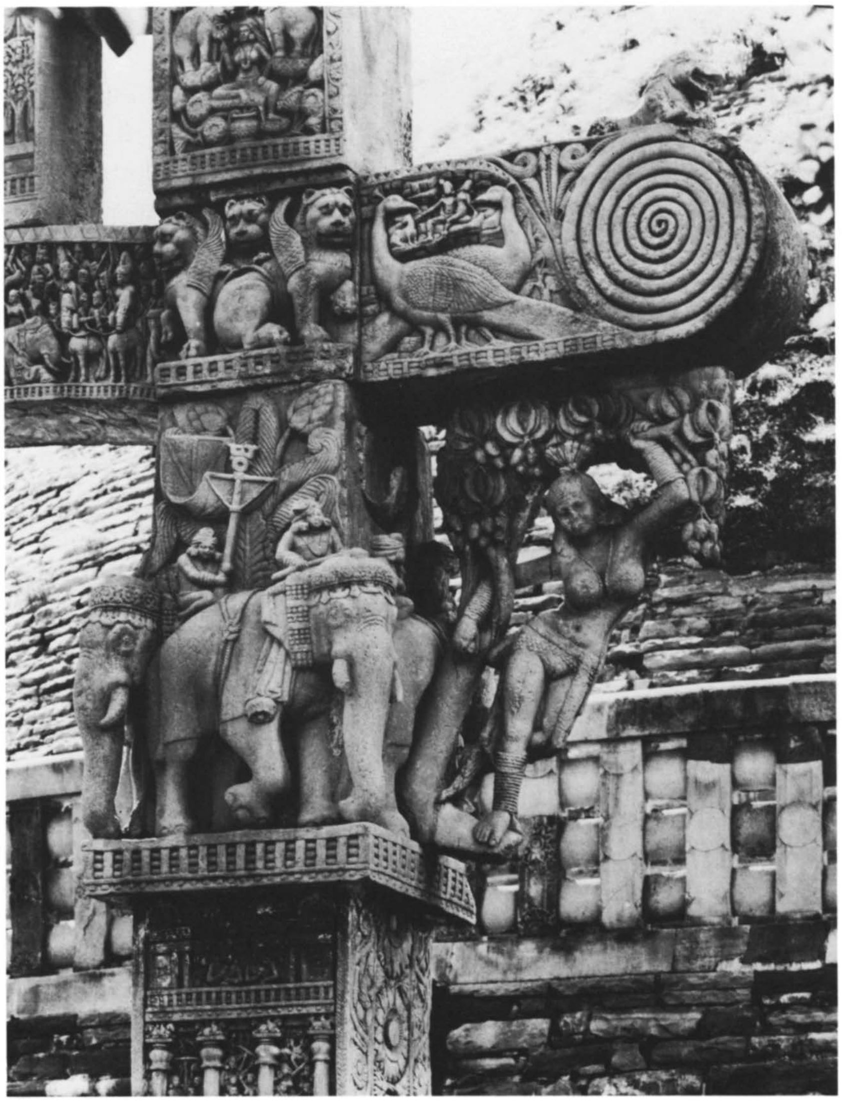


fig. 10. Detail of the north gate of the Great Stupa at Sanchi, Madhya Pradesh, first century B.C.

and the soft, melting surfaces endow the figures with an earthiness quite different from the hieratic aloofness of Bharhut. Ornament and jewelry are greatly reduced so as to emphasize the nudity of the female body; weight is felt once again and depicted convincingly.

Pitalkhora, in the western state of Maharashtra, represents an intermediate stage of development. In this work (see cat. no. 6), the forms are tighter, the surfaces less resilient than those of the sculpture at Sanchi. The expressiveness of the face suffused with joy and lips open in a wide grin contrasts with the solemn monotone of Bharhut; and, as at Sanchi, this sculpture shows a clear attempt to convey mood and emotion.

4. *The first through the third century A.D.* (cat. nos. 8-21)

THE PERIOD FOLLOWING the great achievements of the first century B.C. at Sanchi extended from approximately the first to the third century A.D., and was marked in north India by the dominance of the school of Mathura, a flourishing city and pilgrimage center eighty miles south of Delhi. Artistic remains in the area date back to the second century B.C., but the initial period of activity lasted from the first to the second century A.D., and is marked by the construction of numerous Buddhist and Jaina stupas. Art continued to flourish at the site right up to the twelfth century, but the city was subsequently devastated by war, so that not a single ancient monument remains standing. Instead, remnants consisting of architectural fragments and large numbers of images continue to be discovered in Mathura and its environs. The modern city has been, to a large extent, built over the ancient one, hindering the possibility of extensive archaeological excavation (figs. 11 and 12). Nevertheless, new finds are frequent. Among the most recent are a colossal image of an ascetic (see cat. no. 15) from Nadan, about forty-five miles from Mathura, and an extremely important hoard of sculpture from a sector of the city called Govindnagar.

Mathura sculpture adds further refinements and complexities to the Sanchi style. The female figures, for example, are completely unified and coordinated entities, so that the movement initiated in one limb ripples throughout the rest of the body. The rhythms animating the figures become



fig. 11. Houses of the modern city of Mathura built over ancient mounds.

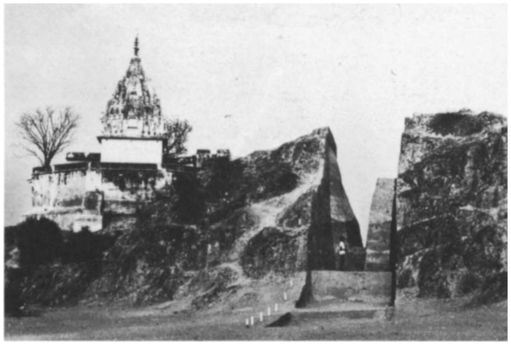


fig. 12. Excavations at an ancient mound in Mathura with a nineteenth-century temple.

progressively more subtle and varied; at times they are so full of life that they convey an impression of playful dance, a sense heightened by the increasing tension that enlivens the surface (see cat. no. 10). Emotions are no longer nonfined to the face alone, but are expressed by the attitude of the entire body, a feature most evident in the figure of a woman holding a flower (see cat. no. 11). All these changes result in a greatly humanized style, in which the distinction between the secular and the spiritual, never very clear in Indian art, is further obscured. We are never certain if a sacred subject is merely a pretext for depicting the luxurious life of the times or if the spiritual is being represented through the sensuous; the answer may well be that this dichotomy occurred to neither the sculptor nor to the contemporary viewer.

Though Indian art of previous periods had been principally Buddhist in subject matter, the Buddha had not been represented anthropomorphically, but by such symbols as a tree, an altar, a pair of foot prints, or a stupa. The image of the Buddha in human form first came into being in this period; and while both Mathura and Gandhāra were probably seats of this development, present evidence allows neither to take credit for its origin. Hotly debated more than fifty years ago, the question of the origin of the Buddha image could now be irrelevant, for there may have been two independent courses of development. We can, however, clearly chart the steps by which the Buddha image evolved at Mathura.

There existed from at least the third century B.C. a tradition of representing Yakṣas (the male counterpart of Yakṣīs) as standing figures dressed in garments and jewelry appro-



fig. 13. Yakṣa, from Vidisa, first century B.C. Vidisa Museum.

priate to men (fig. 13). One hand, raised to the shoulder level, generally held a fly whisk, the other, clenched at the waist, held a bag or some other object. The iconography was fairly consistent, and the images were expressive of great power, fitting for a divinity presiding over the productive forces of nature. When undetermined religious developments produced the need for an image of the Buddha, sculptors adapted the Yakṣa image to this purpose; but because the Buddha was a monk, they divested the Yakṣa of its jewelry, clothing, and other regal appurtenances, and garbed him in simple monastic robes. The palm of the empty, raised right hand, stripped of the traditional fly whisk, was fashioned in the gesture of granting freedom from fear *(abhaya mudrā)*, and the clenched left hand, now emptied, remained in place at the waist. Thus a typical early image of the standing Buddha, little more than a Yakṣa dressed in monk's clothing, possesses a powerful, almost pugilistic aspect, quite at odds with our conventional understanding of the Buddha and Buddhism.

Such are the great first images of the Buddha, like the one dedicated by the monk Bala (fig. 14), and the Buddha from Katra (fig. 15), shown seated rather than standing. Imbued





left:
fig. 14. Image of the Buddha dedicated in the third year of Kaniṣka/A.D. 81. Of Mathura provenance but discovered at Sarnath, near Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh. Sarnath Museum, Sarnath.

right:
fig. 15. Seated Buddha, from Katra Keshavdev, Mathura. The inscription states that the image was dedicated by the mother of someone named Buddharakṣita. Government Museum, Mathura.

with the same extroverted spirit, both images confront the spectator with the vitality of Buddhist teaching. Bodhisattvas, a class of divinities that are potentially capable of achieving Buddhahood, are even closer to the Yakṣa type, as they wear similar clothing (see cat. no. 14). A recently discovered colossal image of a Brahmanical ascetic (see cat. no. 15) has the same vigorous power that we have seen in Buddha, Bodhisattva, and Yakṣa images, and confirms the view that the style of a sculpture has little to do with its religious affiliations. Images of Hindu divinities, some with multiple arms, a characteristic iconographic feature of later periods, also appeared at Mathura from about the second century A.D.

The humanistic strain in Mathura sculpture seems to have inspired more portraits than were usually produced in other periods of Indian art. The works in the exhibition all fall within the traditional framework of Indian portraiture, which attempts to represent characteristic types rather than particular individuals. The male head (see cat. no. 16) is a very fine example, combining strength and sensitivity, while Kubera, the god of wealth (see cat. no. 12), reminds one of a type of prosperous shopkeeper that can still be seen in India today.

The Gandhāra school of sculpture, so-called because it flourished in the ancient province of Gandhāra, with its capital at Takṣaśilā (modern Taxila) in present-day Pakistan, was for much of its existence contemporary with the school of Mathura, but versions of the Gandhāra style seem to have persisted into the sixth century. Although they shared popular Buddhist themes with sites further inland, the images at Gandhāra are rendered in an emphatically naturalistic style that never took root in the subcontinent. The origins of the school are unknown, but it was ultimately influenced by Greco-Roman art. To the student of history, this is not surprising. There existed, for example, on the borders of Gandhāra, kings of Greek names and ancestry, who established the kingdom of Bactria in the wake of Alexander's conquest of Persia and brief raids into India. Their rule ended in the first century B.C., but Hellenistic culture, reinforced by Roman influences, continued to be a strong element in this region for quite some time.

Images of the Buddha and of Bodhisattvas play an important part in the art of Gandhāra, though their conception is quite different than that of Mathura. Instead of Yakṣa-like

forms exuding strength and power, we see figures with a pronouncedly human aspect rendered as compassionate and pious people, as in the *Bodhisattva* of the second century A.D. (see cat. no. 18). The pleated folds of his substantial garments, which are characteristic of the Gandhāra school, depart radically from the traditional Indian treatment of drapery (cf. cat. no. 14). Gandhāra images of the Buddha often convey a feeling of forced piety. The intent of the Gandhāra sculptor to represent the Buddha realistically inspired him to depict an emaciated ascetic on the brink of death, an actual but relatively insignificant event in the Buddha's earthly life. This unique iconographic type is largely unknown elsewhere on the subcontinent. The small head from another such image (see cat. no. 17) displays the keen powers of observation and sensitive psychological insight that characterize Gandhāra sculpture at its best.

Greatly favored in the previous period, the tradition of narrative relief sculpture faded away at Mathura, the few surviving examples being mediocre in quality (see cat. no. 10). Much larger numbers of relief sculpture were produced at Gandhāra, but there, too, the quality was generally poor. It was at the site of Amaravati, in Andhra Pradesh, that sculptors continued to explore creatively the narrative low-relief style of the Great Stupa at Sanchi and brought it to its fullest realization during this period (see fig. 2 and cat. no. 19). The compositions at Amaravati are extremely complex and sophisticated. The margins of the medallions are barely able to contain the crowded figures that swing and turn in highly animated positions, their frenzied action surging forth from the hard surface of the stone from which they are fashioned. Such fluent movement has never been seen either before or after in the history of Indian art. The sculptor's material was forced to yield its entire character to his will. The later phases of the Andhra style are seen in the somewhat congealed and disjointed forms at Nagarjunakonda. However, several of the Buddha images recovered at the site display great restraint in their carving and reveal the Andhra style in a new and unexpected light.



fig. 16. Buddha by the artist Dinna, dated in the year 115/A.D. 434-35. From Govindnagar in Mathura, Uttar Pradesh. Government Museum, Mathura.

5. *The fourth through the sixth century A.D.* (cat. nos. 22-42)

THE FOURTH CENTURY A.D. marks the rise of what is often called the classical phase of Indian art. Sculpture of this period provides evidence of a turn away from the exultation of the mundane, as expressed in the earlier works of Sanchi and Mathura (see cat. nos. 7, 9-11), and reflects a movement toward the inner realm of the spirit; thus displaying the contemplative aspect with which Indian art is most frequently associated. This change can be illustrated through comparison of a Buddha image of the previous period (see fig. 15) with a like one from Mathura or Sarnath in the new style (see cat. no. 9 and fig. 16). The assertive sensuousness of the body in the former is absent in the Mathura and Sarnath Buddhas, with the result that the form is freed from any suggestion of the mortality of the flesh. Similarly, the bold, extroverted character of the earlier sculpture is supplanted by a vision turned inward, suggesting a mastery over the world of the spirit. Thus the image of the Buddha now corresponds for the first time to what since has been the ideal conception of the Buddha. Nor is this transformation confined to representations of the Buddha; divinities of other religions exhibit the same serenity and introspection as they develop iconographies of their own (see cat. no. 24).

The period from the fourth to the sixth century marks a clear watershed in the history of Indian sculpture, dramatically separating what had gone before from what was to come afterward. The changes are so great as to appear revolutionary, but only seemingly so, for the new style grew out of the older one. We may gain further insight into the nature of this rapid transformation through another comparison of works of the two periods (see cat. nos. 14 and 23). The modeling of the earlier Bodhisattva torso is assertive and gives a keen sense of tactile flesh. The body is sharply demarcated into two parts by the strong horizontal line of the belt, which together with the flat, angular necklace is the last memory of the additive concept of form so emphatically stated in the section of a railing with a Yakṣī at Bharhut (see fig. 8). By contrast, the *Male Torso* (see cat. no. 23) from this period forms an integral unit, the individual parts merging easily into one another. The contours flow in smooth and uninterrupted measures from the shoulders to the feet, and the graceful, curvilinear rhythms of the drooping girdle and coiled necklace further bind the parts together. The model-

ing of the body creates the illusion that its forms swell from within. Moreover, the lateral emphasis of earlier sculpture is avoided in favor of expansion in all directions. At the same time, the surface of the work undergoes a dramatic reduction to a series of more abstract and elegant planes. True, the work retains a sense of weight, a Mathura tradition, but it is stripped of the trammels of the mundane. In its unique balance between the spiritual and the sensual, form and ornament, and strength and grace, this style clearly displays a harmonious dignity that is never repeated thereafter.

Mathura seems to have been a leading center of artistic activity during this time, but was not as predominant in the north as it had been between the first and third centuries A.D. Nevertheless, the sculpture exhibited here demonstrates that its achievements were of the highest order and its influence considerable, the works having provided the initial inspiration for the very distinct style flourishing in eastern Uttar Pradesh at Sarnath during the second half of the fifth century A.D. With flatter and more abstract surfaces and lighter and less emphatically modeled forms, the Sarnath pieces forego the solemnity and grandeur of the Mathura idiom in favor of a linear and ethereal statement. This Sarnath style was also highly influential, particularly in the neighboring state of Bihar, where in keeping with local tradition, it was endowed with greater weight and volume (see cat. no. 34). Several other centers of sculpture sprang up not far from Sarnath. One of these was the ancient city of Kausambi, from the environs of which we have an important sculpture of a seated Buddha (see cat. no. 27). It is at once strongly inspired by Mathura and identical to early work at Sarnath, from where it could well have been imported. The exquisite column and relief from Bhitari, another site in this area, also show pronounced affiliation with Sarnath sculpture (see cat. nos. 32 and 33). A series of finds from all over the region indicates that from Mathura to Sarnath and points still further east, the Gangetic valley was a resurgent center of artistic activity whose scope has yet to be properly investigated.



fig. 17. The boar incarnation of Viṣṇu, from Eran, Madhya Pradesh, early fifth century A.D. Hari Singh Gaur Museum, Sagar University, Sagar.

Because of its relatively protected situation, the state of Madhya Pradesh preserves many remains from the fourth to the sixth century A.D. in a variety of accomplished regional styles. As revealed in the image of Varāha from Eran in the region of Sanchi (fig. 17), the early sculpture emphasizes massive volume, reminiscent of work from the previous



fig. 18. Architectural fragment with floral ornament, from Bhumara, Madhya Pradesh, second half of the fifth century A.D. Allahabad Museum, Allahabad.



period at Mathura. To the east, in the region around Khoh, Bhumara, and Nachna, a style arose with much greater affinities to Sarnath, displaying restrained plasticity, refined linear elegance, and in its more intimate moments, lyrical beauty (see cat. no. 36). The carving of its architectural ornament, in particular, displays a virtuosity not seen elsewhere (fig. 18).

Still other styles showing great individuality and beauty emerged and developed in various areas of north India during this period. From a ruined temple at Mukandara on the border of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan comes a superb architectural fragment (see cat. no. 38). Important remains have also been found at Mandor and Nagari in Rajasthan, and a splendid idiom has been isolated in the southern part of the state and neighboring Gujarat (see cat. no. 39). This style is almost ponderous in its emphasis on mass, but nonetheless very refined.

In western India, the state of Maharashtra was also a center of artistic activity at this time, its most famous site being the cave temples at Ajanta. Though it is the paintings there that have attracted most attention because of their rarity (fig. 19), some of the sculpture is also of superb quality (fig. 20). The heaviness of form that is shared with work in Gujarat is undoubtedly inherited from massively modeled sculpture like that of the cave temples of Pitalkhora (see cat.





left page:
fig. 20. The divinities Jambhala and Hāriti, from Cave 2, Ajanta, Maharashtra, late fifth century A.D.

left:
fig. 19. Image of a Bodhisattva painted on a wall of Cave 1 at Ajanta, Maharashtra, late fifth century A.D.

right:
fig. 21. An amorous couple, from the cave temple at Karla, Maharashtra, first century B.C.

no. 7) and Karla (second to first century B.C.; fig. 21). As the work at Ajanta is all *in situ,* it has not been possible to display sculpture from that site in the exhibition. Recent discoveries in the ancient region of Vidarbha (see cat. nos. 40-42), now part of Maharashtra, indicate the existence of another splendid idiom, barely suspected a decade ago, and further finds will continue to add to the richness and variety of this period.

If present evidence reflects the true state of affairs, the southern states of Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu, and Karnataka were not very productive during this period. Artistic activity began to pick up again in these regions only in the late sixth and early seventh centuries and culminated in many great achievements of the eighth century and later.

6. *The seventh century onward* (cat. nos. 43-100)

North India

THE LONG DURATION OF this period (often called the medieval period) may be attributed to the strength of shared stylistic characteristics, some of which have survived tenaciously into recent, if not modern, times. This continuum is very

fig. 22. Sculpture on the walls of a modern temple dedicated to Viṣṇu at Birlagram, near Nagda, Rajasthan. Prabhashankar O. Sompura, architect.



evident in south India, which was relatively protected from the changes wrought by a new wave of particularly destructive invasions sweeping much of the north in the thirteenth century; it is also visible, though to a lesser extent, in a few relatively protected and remote areas of the north. Traditional sculptors working in the medieval manner may be found, for example, in Orissa and Gujarat; and though their work is now often stereotyped and lifeless, they employ centuries-old techniques as part of an artificial revival of the style, as well as in the production of deceptive copies of ancient sculpture (fig. 22).

Careful studies have demonstrated that the style of the medieval period was not as conservative as was once thought, but was continually changing, albeit at a slow and gradual pace. Regional idioms flourished and were more numerous than in earlier periods, but the differences are often much subtler so that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish one from another. This period also witnessed the construction of innumerable stone temples, many of which attained considerable size. As vast amounts of sculpture were required to adorn their lavish exteriors and simpler interiors, much of the work is little more than rapidly executed architectural ornament. The images exhibit the cursory

carving typical of work produced in such large quantities and should be evaluated as part of the total decorative scheme of a temple. The generally mediocre level of work should not obscure the great achievements, for within their own context, they are as fine as those of any other period of Indian art, as evidenced by examples in the exhibition.

The early stages of the medieval style in north India are still quite unclear. The beginnings seem to have been hesitant, sculptors groping for direction amidst the disintegrating elements of the great style of the earlier period, which very definitely came to an end by the sixth century. The new style began to gain some coherence only by the eighth century, and though the work retains some of the sculptural qualities of earlier examples, it is increasingly decorative. There is a progression from the rather amorphous, laterally expanding forms of the eighth-century dancing goddess from Pandrenthan (see cat. no. 78), to the firmer surfaces and pronounced rhythms seen in the ninth-century mother-goddesses from Kannauj (see cat. no. 43). The modeling of the latter, handled with elegant restraint, retains a clear feeling for volume, and the delicate ornament enhances the smoothness of the body it adorns. With the style definitely crystalized, various works of great beauty were produced in the north, represented here by the magnificent bronzes from Bihar (see cat. nos. 59 and 60), the mother-goddess from Gujarat (see cat. no. 58), and the bronze halo from Kashmir (see cat. no. 80).

With the tenth century, the style began to lose its bloom. Forms are tighter, flatter, and more angular, and ornament more obtrusive. The increasing importance of canonical rules of iconography and ritual for the manufacture of sculpture accounts for some of the uniformity of works of this period, but works of high quality were still produced in number. One such image is the powerful Cāmuṇḍā from Madhya Pradesh (see cat. no. 47).

The trends set in sculpture of the tenth century were strongly accentuated in works of the eleventh century. As geometric elements took precedence over plastic ones, forms grew still harsher, surfaces more congealed. Ornament tended to overpower form, becoming repetitive in the process. The unity of the body was disrupted, so that its parts were treated as separate elements assembled together in a mechanical manner. Sharply etched features impart a mask-like character to faces, and there is evidence of a reversion to

a kind of cubic form noticed earlier at Bharhut (see fig. 8). Given the immense increase in productivity, the decline in the general level of quality comes as no surprise. Again, however, works of considerable brilliance are not lacking; though it exhibits all the qualities associated with the style of the period, the amorous couple from the neighboring region of Khajuraho (ancient Jejākabhukti) in Madhya Pradesh (see cat. no. 45) stands out as a work of great refinement. The existence of regional elements within the context of the medieval style can be seen in the highly ornate workmanship of the Śiva-Pārvatī from western Madhya Pradesh (see cat. no. 48), an area known in ancient times as Mālava, where, as this example illustrates, the execution is generally more finished, the detail fussier, and the forms more rounded and relaxed. The style of Ḍāhala (the area around modern Jabalpur) differs from those of both these regions in its greater emotional expressiveness, easier handling of form, and in the complexity and balanced elegance of its execution (see cat. nos. 51 and 52).

Another distinctive style among those flourishing in north India during this period is that of eastern India, or Bihar and Bengal. Though this work also is characterized by the tautness of surface found in other north Indian styles, it retains, to a much greater extent, the sense of weight and rounded volume of earlier traditions. This is also true of the alert and lively style of Orissa, whose forms are outlined by a sensuous line of utmost sophistication (see cat. nos. 68 and 72).

Sculpture in the border state of Assam appears to have relied heavily upon the idiom of eastern India, but is rendered, on the whole, with less intensity. The style, at its most expressive, incorporates indigenous forms shaped by its large tribal population (see cat. no. 77). This situation is repeated in Himachal Pradesh, where we notice a similarly enigmatic relationship between the local art of the mountain tribes and the sedate and stable arts of the plain (see cat. no. 84). The style of the remote Himalayan valley of Kashmir shows no such ambiguities (see cat. nos. 78-80). It belongs to the classical tradition, its muscular forms and textured drapery recalling a distant debt to Gandhāra. All these features make the sculpture of Kashmir easily distinguishable from works of other parts of India, including Himachal Pradesh, over which it exercised significant influence.

Bronze Sculpture of North India

ALTHOUGH BRONZE SCULPTURE enjoyed a long history in north India, the number of extant works from this area is considerably less than in the south. The casting technique employed was the *cire perdue,* or lost wax process, involving the use of a wax model to form a mold into which the molten metal was poured. The earliest remains of bronze sculpture are the magnificent specimens of the Harappan culture, which display a monumentality that belies their small size (see cat. no. 1). Little survives from the periods immediately following, and the next significant group of bronzes belongs to the fifth and sixth centuries (see cat. nos. 37 and 42). Some of the examples from eastern India inspired an accomplished style that flourished in several centers in Bihar and Bengal, the most famous of which are Nalanda and possibly Kurkihar. The ninth century marked the high point of achievement, which is represented in the exhibition by two supremely beautiful works (see cat. nos. 59 and 60). This excellence was sustained in work of the later period as well: the crowned Buddha of the eleventh century (see cat. no. 61) and the seated Avalokiteśvara of the twelfth (see cat. no. 62), surpassing contemporary stone sculpture in their extreme elegance. The style of eastern India also extended southward into Madhya Pradesh; in their exquisite craftsmanship and rendering of detail, two bronzes from Sirpur (cat. nos. 54 and 55), an area known in ancient times as Dakṣiṇa Kosala, overshadow works discovered in Bihar and Bengal.

By analogy to stone sculpture, we may postulate the existence of bronze sculpture throughout north India, but with the exception of Gujarat, evidence continues to be tantalizingly spare. Recent finds at Banpur in Orissa (see cat. no. 69) and Guwahati in Assam (see cat. no. 77) give us an inkling of the type of work produced in those areas. Discoveries of the last two decades have yielded a fairly comprehensive corpus of bronzes from Kashmir, revealing the existence of a style of great range and flexibility that lasted from at least the eighth to the twelfth century. A Buddha image (see cat. no. 79) is notable for the quiet dignity of its forms, the precise and elaborate geometry of its patterns, and the careful execution of detail. The great halo from Devsar (see cat. no. 80) contains images both unique and compelling.

South India

SOUTH INDIA, particularly the state of Andhra Pradesh, possessed notably accomplished schools of sculpture from the second century B.C. to the third century A.D., which rivalled, if not surpassed, contemporary work from other parts of India (see cat. nos. 5 and 21). In view of this long tradition, the paucity of work dating from the fourth to the sixth century, when north Indian sculpture was in full flower, is inexplicable. The seventh century, however, saw the inauguration of mature artistic activity quite free of the painfully hesitant quality present in the few contemporary works from north India. The dancing Śiva from Andhra Pradesh (see cat. no. 88) and the flying figures from Karnataka (see cat. no. 85) are fine examples of the opening phase of this new period. Examples from Mahabalipuram in Tamilnadu remain *in situ,* but provide a distant echo of the style of Amaravati in their smooth carving and slender proportions (fig. 23). In keeping with the consistent development over all of India, this work lost its simplicity by the ninth and tenth centuries, the forms becoming more ornate and complex without abandoning their serenity and balance. Sculpture of this phase is among the noblest produced in the area (see cat. no. 91). Plasticity continued to diminish in the following centuries under the burden of increasingly rigid ornamentation. A particularly extreme but playful version of this tendency occurred in Karnataka, in the period extending from the eleventh century and reaching its climax in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (fig. 24). Ornament is highly elaborated here, the figures almost disappearing under the impact, their forms inextricably meshed with its texture (see cat. no. 90).



fig. 23. Detail from the great relief depicting Arjuna's penance at Mahabalipuram, Tamilnadu, seventh century A.D.

Bronze Sculpture of South India

THE BRONZES OF south India splendidly represent the artistic genius of the country. A large number of works have survived, many of them having come to light only recently. It has been possible to present an outstanding group of masterpieces in this exhibition (see cat. nos. 92-100). The earliest bronze sculpture of the medieval period dates from the eighth century; after the dignified and highly accomplished style of the ninth, the work appears harder in form, a feature

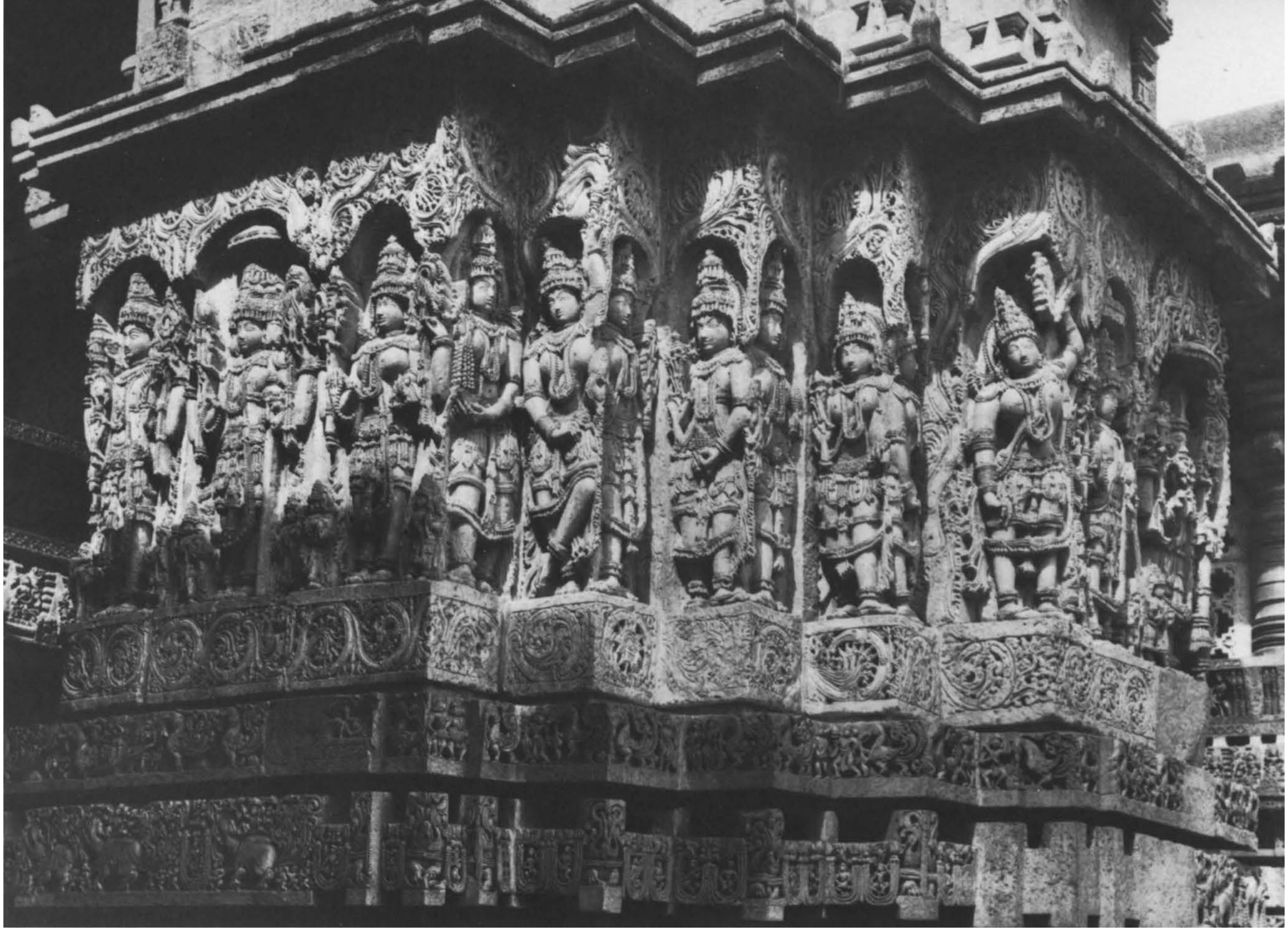


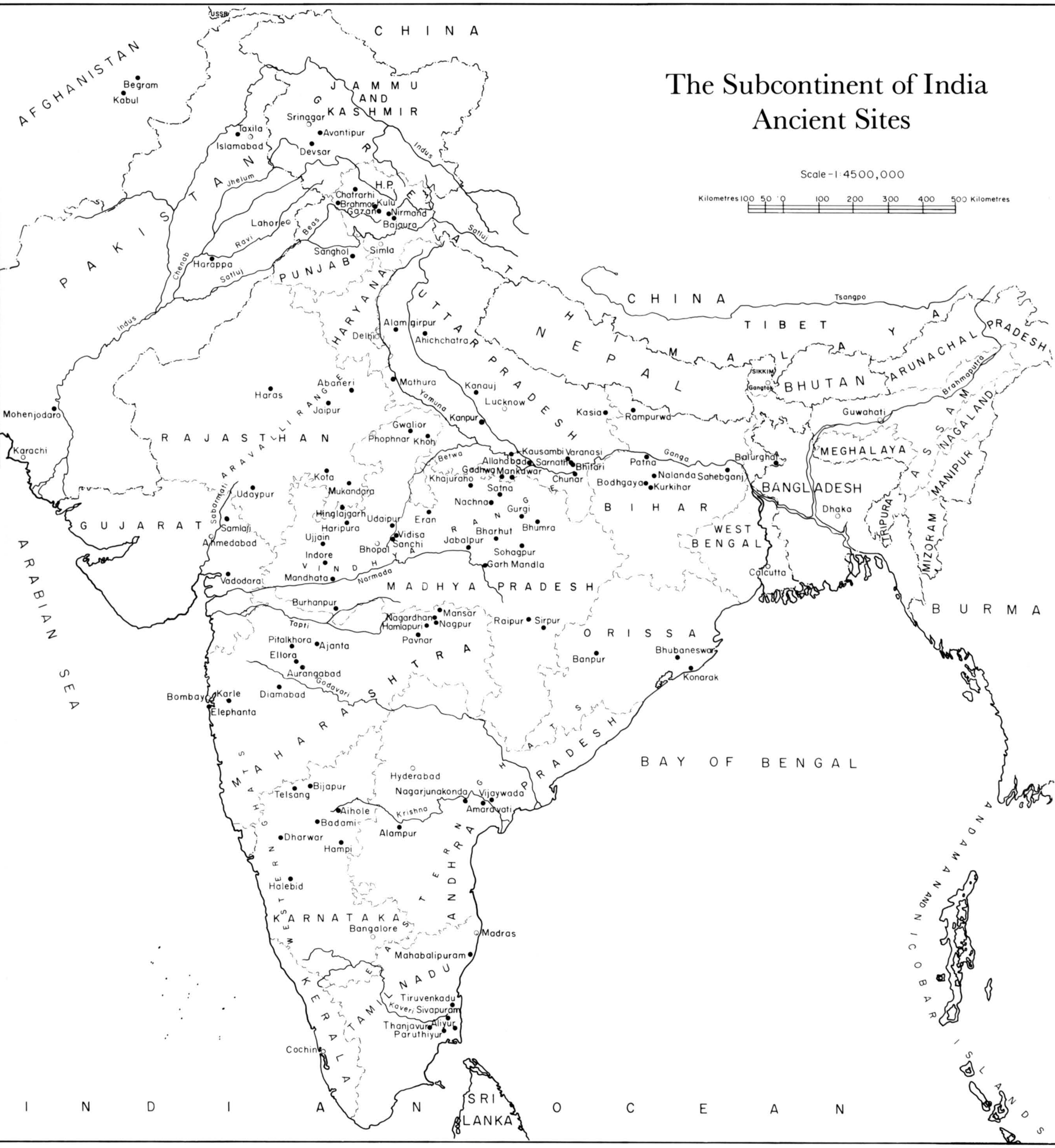
fig. 24. Detail of a wall, Hoyśaleśvara temple, Halebidu, Karnataka, mid-twelfth century A.D.

less obtrusive in bronze than in the relatively inferior stone sculpture of this time. Though diminished, the feeling for the smoothness of the human body, its forms enhanced by supple ornament, is never quite lost, a subtle creative power being evident in bronze sculpture of a comparatively later period, when it had already emphatically departed from much of the work in stone.

NOTE TO THE READER

Measurements for the objects in the exhibition are given in centimeters followed by inches in parentheses. Height precedes width and depth for all objects unless otherwise indicated. Inventory numbers for most works are given after the name of the lender. Sanskrit inscriptions have been translated by the author unless a different source is noted. Full citations for short references can be found in the bibliography, and frequently mentioned Sanskrit names and terms are listed in the glossary. Two asterisks (**) before an entry indicate those works not in the exhibition. Objects added to the exhibition as the catalogue went to press are included in the addendum.

The Subcontinent of India
Ancient Sites



1.
The Proto-historic Period



I

Buffalo

Second half of the third millennium B.C.
Mohenjo-daro, now in Pakistan
Bronze, 7.5 x 3.5 cm. (2 15/16 x 1 3/8 in.)
National Museum, New Delhi
Sd. 3319/1046
Literature: Mackay 1937-38

THIS LITTLE-KNOWN buffalo, found 2 ft. 11 in. below the surface in Room 23, BL. 6, of the SD area of Mohenjo-daro, is a superb animal sculpture; together with early representations on seals, it testifies to the sympathetic interest that the Indian artist had in depicting nature and his ability to capture the intrinsic life of its forms. Though the surface is badly corroded, the features and bearing of the beast are presented with confidence and uninterrupted power.

The massive body, with its bulging belly, curved haunches, and heavy neck, is supported by strong legs, which at the back strain under its weight. An indentation at the rump suggests the gentle hollow in the flesh between the haunch and the line of the spine, which ends in the flick of the tail. Only the tips and base remain of the short horns that once swept back to the shoulders. Downturned ears, heavy eyes, and a blunt, but soft muzzle articulate the alert head, as the beast leads with its nose in a characteristic manner, which the artist has been careful to observe. A large metal patch, indicating an ancient repair, is found on the back.

The sense of form evident in this sculpture is imbued with the same sculptural quality seen in the Harappa torso (see Intro., fig. 6) and rendered with almost equal sophistication. It is also visible in the rendering of the bull on the seal (see cat. no. 2b) and later in the large sculpture of the Rampurwa bull capital (see Intro., fig. 4). That the Indian artist was from earliest times at ease with and quite particular about his depiction of natural life is evident from the examples of the two different types of cattle displayed in the exhibition. His observation would seem to extend beyond that of physical outline to an interest in posture and other features that indicate the nature of these animals as well.



2 b, e, f

2
Six Seals
Third millennium B.C.
Steatite
Literature: Marshall 1931; Mackay 1937-38; and frequently thereafter

a) **Unicorn before an Incense Burner** **
Harappa, now in Pakistan
4.5 x 4.5 cm. (1¾ x 1¾ in.)
National Museum, New Delhi PI 40

b) **Brahmani Bull**
Kalibangan, Rajasthan
2.3 x 2.3 x 0.7 cm. (1 x 1 x ¼ in.)
Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi 68.1/32

c) **Figure Attacking a Horned Tiger** **
Mohenjo-daro, now in Pakistan
3.5 x 3.5 cm. (1⅜ x 1⅜ in.)
National Museum, New Delhi VS 1574

These seals stand out in size, motif, and quality from a corpus that to date numbers more than two thousand examples. They are in the conventional square format, with a perforated boss on the reverse to facilitate use. Of the many uses conjectured, archaeological proof is certain for only one: that of sealing bags and packages.

One or two lines of writing and figural motifs were cut into the soft steatite, which was then polished, coated with alkali, and heated. Despite persistent efforts by scholars and several claims to the contrary, the script remains undeciphered. The writing appears to be unrelated to the images below, but the depictions alone supply valuable information about the life and artistic achievements of the people who produced them.

The most frequently represented animal is a unicorn, which in all but one example stands before what has been identified as an incense burner consisting of two vessels joined by a staff. The bovine animal bears a serrated horn, a striped muzzle, and a covering over its shoulders, executed by emphatic lines that serve to highlight the voluminous rendering of the body enlivened by a subtle play of surfaces. This same naturalistic interest appears to an even greater extent in the treatment of the strong haunches, slender hoofs, and weighty dewlap of the Brahmani bull of the second seal. Unlike the mythic unicorn, which was venerated throughout ancient west Asia, the high-humped bull is represented only in India, though the significance attached to the animal is not yet clear.



2a



2c



2d

d) **A Pīpal Tree and Unicorns**
Mohenjo-daro, now in Pakistan
3.4 x 3.3 x 1.9 cm. (1⅜ x 1 5/16 x ¾ in.)
National Museum, New Delhi

e) **A Tiger and a Seated Figure**
Kalibangan, Rajasthan
3.2 x 3.2 x 1.7 cm. (1¼ x 1¼ x ¾ in.)
Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi 68.1/80

f) **Elephant**
Kalibangan, Rajasthan
2.6 x 2.6 x 1.3 cm. (1 x 1 x ½ in.)
Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi 68.1/84

A third seal draws upon a familiar motif from ancient Sumer to depict a figure with horns, hoofs, and a tail, attacking a horned tiger. The naturalism seen in the previous examples is less evident in this scene, appearing only in the irregular branching of the tree.

The fourth seal shows a *pīpal (ficus religiosa),* a tree sacred in India to the present day, flanked by the curving and striated necks of unicornlike creatures which emerge from a petaled boss affixed to the center of the trunk. The leaves, including the veins, are minutely carved, but the representation of the trees is schematic.

The fifth and sixth seals are from Kalibangan, an extensive Harappan site located in Rajasthan. One of them (2e) shows a tiger that turns its head back to look at a human figure who is seated with one leg doubled at the knee, the other crossed over it, a knee raised. The right hand hangs to the side, the other rests on the knee, palm held up toward the face. Two fronds of the tree behind him are so extended as to suggest that the figure is seated amongst the branches. The massive body of the tiger is sharply striated while the seated figure is strongly linear. The last seal (2f) depicts an elephant, with sharp tusks, lanky trunk, fleshy neck, and a small ear. Attention to detail is evident in the puckered skin over the backbone, but the representation, though competent, lacks the ease with which the animal is usually rendered in later times.

J. SEYLLER

3

Chariot

c. 2000-1500 B.C.
Daimabad, Maharashtra
Bronze, 22 x 52 x 17.5 cm. (8⅝ x 20½ x 6⅞ in.)
Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi 74.77/4
on loan to the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, Bombay
Literature: S. R. Rao 1978; Dhavalikar 1982



fig. 3a. Dancing girl, from Mohenjo-daro, now in Pakistan, third millennium B.C. National Museum, New Delhi.

RECENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK has greatly extended the geographical range of the Harappan culture, with sites being discovered far beyond the Indus valley proper. One such place is Daimabad, in the Ahmednagar district, some distance northeast of Bombay. It was continuously occupied by people who worked copper and bronze, but not iron, throughout most of the second millennium B.C., after which it was abandoned. Pottery and artifacts date its early strata (c. 2000-1750 B.C.) to what is commonly called the late Harappan phase.

In 1974 a group of local people, surreptitiously digging up a tree near an archaeological mound, discovered a cache of four large bronzes. Consisting of an elephant, a rhinoceros, a water buffalo, and a chariot, all cast in the lost wax technique, the solid objects are made of a copper alloy containing some arsenic and a little tin.

The chariot displayed here is a bronze representation after a wooden original. It has a pair of solid wheels with sockets on the inside, to which an axle is rigidly joined so that it turns along with the wheel. The chassis consists of a plank; its sides have low boards affixed to them, below each of which extend two rings to form a simple axle-case. The frame above the plank is formed by two vertical beams with curving tops secured by two crossbars, the upper one being straight while the lower one is angular. Two beams also project forward from the ends of the top crossbar to meet at an angle over the back of a canine model placed on the tongue just beyond the plank. The pole itself is of some length, its end inserted into a yoke with curved extremities and provided with two bows to which are harnessed a pair of oxen stationed on two rectangular panels.

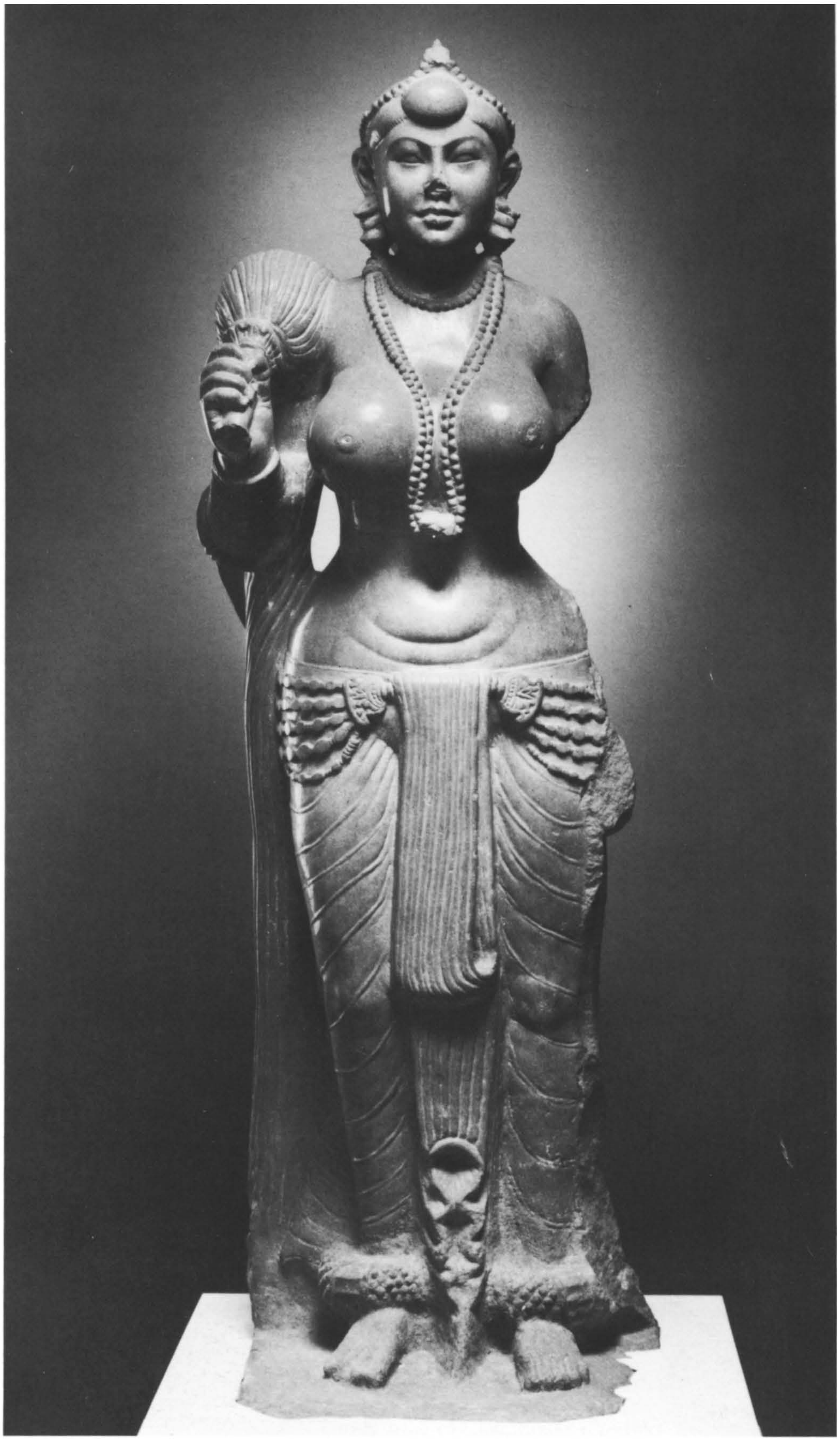
The animals are highly stylized, with short muzzles, small triangles for ears, and horns curving forward. The awkwardly heavy bodies have markedly tall humps and are supported on somewhat stocky legs. The contour of the rear haunches is rendered in a particularly exaggerated curve rising from the notch of the knee. The tall charioteer, knees bent, and with bulbous hips, stands on the platform and gently leans forward, both hands resting on the upper crossbar of the chassis. The right hand wields what appears to be a bent stick over the dog. The man is nude, except for a triangular loincloth trimmed by four knobs. His rather small face rests on a tall neck and has a somewhat stumpy nose, receding forehead, small eyes, and a full lower lip. The hair



is parted in the center and is gathered in an oblong bun just above the long neck. Both the harness and the reins, if any existed, were made of perishable material and have disappeared.

Because the chariot and its companion pieces did not come from a strictly controlled archaeological excavation, there has been some speculation that they may belong to a time much after the late Harappa period. Those who support this theory also point to the arsenic content of the bronze, a feature missing in other chalcolithic sites in the region of the Deccan where Daimabad is located. Aside from archaeological and metallurgical considerations, which are inconclusive in themselves, the style of the chariot makes an earlier dating equally probable. The taut and elongated figure of the charioteer restates in a somewhat simplified manner the kind of form so masterfully expressed in figures like the dancing girl from Mohenjo-daro (fig. 3a). The oxen, too, are congealed versions of counterparts in earlier Harappan cultures. The metallurgical and stylistic evidence would tempt one to think of the object as a late Indus valley product imported into Daimabad. At the same time, the sharp, stylized curve of the rear haunches of the oxen relates not only to the metropolitan Indus valley tradition, but also to contemporary representations on Daimabad pottery; hence, the possibility of local manufacture cannot be entirely dismissed.

2.
The Third Century B.C.



4

Goddess Holding a Fly Whisk

Probably third century B.C.
Didarganj in Patna, Bihar
Polished sandstone, 163 x 49 cm. (64¼ x 19¼ in.)
Patna Museum, Patna
Literature: Spooner 1919; and frequently thereafter

THIS LIFE-SIZE sculpture of a Yakṣī (which may be understood loosely as a fertility goddess) came to light accidentally in 1917, due to erosion caused by the Ganges River at the modern city of Patna, also identified as Pāṭaliputra, the ancient capital of the imperial Maurya dynasty. Soon after its discovery, it was set up for worship. But because the image carries a fly whisk, commonly associated with attendants rather than a divinity, it was possible to persuade the people to relinquish the image to the Patna Museum. As a matter of fact, the fly whisk is a common iconographic attribute of this type of divinity, but this, fortunately, was unknown to the donors.

Apart from folk representations in terra-cotta, this sculpture is one of the earliest visual statements of the Indian ideal of female beauty, an ideal that finds constant expression throughout Indian art and literature. Wide hips and full breasts, physical attributes associated specifically with birth and fertility, are emphasized. The sculptor played upon a common poetic conceit when he made the torso bend forward under the weight of breasts heavy with milk. The ideally beautiful woman is thus seen as a young mother. This ancient conception of beauty as abundance and productivity is inherent in the literal meaning of many Sanskrit words that denote beauty, and underlies the significance of much Indian ornament.

The image is painstakingly burnished so that the surface shines like glass. The lower garment, draped around the waist and clasped by a girdle, the upper garment, pulled across the back and allowed to fall at the sides, and the jewelry at the ankles, forearm, and neck are characteristic items of clothing and ornament that are present in all sculpture of women from this point on.

The confident modeling of the fleshy body, the ease with which its weight is carried by the left leg, and the sensitive features all bespeak the elegant naturalism associated with sculpture of the Maurya period, seen at its best in the superb bull from Rampurwa (see Intro., fig. 4). The stately tempo of the line as it defines and moves smoothly and sensuously over the figure, faltering neither between expanses of flesh and their physical details, nor in transitions between the figure and its accoutrements, is also a striking characteristic of sculpture of this period. Nevertheless, as works of this time are relatively few, the date of this image remains problematical.

3.
The Second and First Centuries B.C.



5
Yakṣī
Mid-second century B.C.
Amaravati, Andhra Pradesh
Limestone, 72 x 41 cm. (28⅜ x 16⅛ in.)
Amaravati Museum, Amaravati
Literature: Sarkar and Nainar 1980

THE MAIN STUPA at Amaravati, on the lower reaches of the Krishna River, was the greatest Buddhist monument in a region of south India known as Āndhradeśa in ancient times, and which had a history spanning from the third century B.C. to the fourteenth century A.D. The artistically active period, however, seems to have come to an end in the third century A.D.

This fragmentary sculpture, uncovered during excavations carried out at the site in 1958-59, can be assigned to the mid-second century B.C. It represents a Yakṣī of the type seen at Bharhut (see Intro., fig. 8), with close stylistic affinities in carving, degree of abstraction, and clarity of detail. Nevertheless, a rather different idiom is evident here, for though the image is made up of cubic shapes, there is a greater subtlety in the rendering of nuances of form and more fluidity in the contours. The surface, too, is more tactile, and there is a delicate interplay between the lightly



etched detail of jewelry and dress and the body. The raised upper eyelid gives a certain poignancy of expression to the otherwise solemn face. It is permissible to say, particularly in view of the continuing mastery in later works (see Intro., fig. 2 and cat. no. 19), that the style of this region possesses a certain freshness and vivacity that distinguishes it from contemporary sculpture in other parts of India.

6

A Dwarf Yakṣa by the Artist Kaṇhadāsa

Early first century B.C.
Pitalkhora, Cave 3, Maharashtra
Gabbro, 91 x 59 cm. (35⅞ x 23¼ in.)
National Museum, New Delhi 67.195
Literature: Deshpande 1959

West india, most notably the state of Maharashtra, is known for its cave architecture, which mainly consists of Buddhist temples and monasteries cut into the rock of the characteristic hill ranges of the region. The earliest caves date from the second century B.C. and others were excavated up to the eleventh century. They include the famous caves at Ajanta and Ellora.

One such group of caves is found at Pitalkhora, about fifty miles from the modern city of Aurangabad. Neglected because of its relative inaccessibility, the site was cleared by the Archaeological Survey of India in the 1950s. A surprisingly large number of works of superb quality were discovered in the course of these operations, and these shed welcome light on this region's early sculptural history.

The image of the dwarf Yakṣa was uncovered from the debris piled up in the forecourt of Cave 3, the principal temple at the site. He is shown in a standing posture, one leg bent at the knee. The arms, one of which is broken, are raised to steady a shallow bowl on the head, its sides decorated with lotus petals carved in low relief. The hair is dressed in rows of curls. A double fold of flesh at his sides leads into a pot belly. The lower garment is secured to the waist by a cord; the pleated upper garment falls over the chest, follows the contour of the belly, and is drawn across the back. A striking feature of the jewelry is the large necklace with its human-faced beads and triple prongs at the base. The ears have frilled edges, which are often seen on Yakṣa images.

The most prominent feature of the image is the heavy head, its face suffused with a happy grin. This is perhaps the first time in Indian art that an attempt was made to endow an image with vivid emotional expression. The sculpture does not possess the angularity of the earlier period (see Intro., fig. 8), nor has it achieved the softer and riper render-

ing of subsequent work on the doorways of the Great Stupa at Sanchi (see cat. no. 7). It can thus be dated to an intermediate phase, c. 100 B.C.

On the back of the palm of the right hand is an incised inscription that reads: *kaṇhadāsena hiraṁkārena kata* (made by the goldsmith Kaṇhadāsa). This record is unusual in the history of Indian art until relatively recent times, for very few artists signed their works, or were individually named.

7

Torso of a Yakṣī

Mid-first century B.C.
Sanchi, Madhya Pradesh
Sandstone, 74 x 36 cm. (29⅛ x 14⅛ in.), left; 93 x 87 cm. (36⅝ x 34¼ in.), right
Archaelogical Museum, Sanchi
2867
Literature: Marshall, Foucher, and Majumdar 1940

THE GREAT STUPA at Sanchi (see Intro., fig. 9), not far from the important city of Vidisa, is a monument of great importance to Buddhists, for it once contained the bodily relics of the Buddha himself. It was initially built in the Maurya period, and a monolithic column with a lion capital of that era stands nearby. Considerable enlargements were made in the second century B.C., the period of the plain stone railing as well. The four gates of the cardinal directions were inserted into the railing around the mid-first century B.C. They are of considerable size (33 ft. high) and have square posts, each with an animal capital, above which three architraves are stacked. Narrative reliefs and statuary cover the gates from top to bottom. Particularly striking are the large Yakṣīs beneath trees that serve as brackets supporting the lowermost architrave (see Intro., fig. 10).

The image here, said to be from the west gateway, is a particularly fine, if damaged, example of these Yakṣī sculptures. The deep fissure at the waist has been patched with plaster. Though the figure appears to lack a lower garment, the folded cloth brought up and tucked in at the back proves otherwise. The jewelry consists of a girdle of several strands with two long strings that cross between the breasts (where they are clasped by a rosette) as well as at the back. The hair is arranged in two flat braids joined to each other at the top and completely covering the back, above which are swinging jeweled garlands, a part of the now-missing coif.

That this gently swelling body is filled with life is conveyed by the sensuous, resilient rendering of the surface of its flesh, and this mastery of the depiction of volume and texture indicates the great change that occurred in Indian sculpture during the approximately one hundred years that separate the Bharhut railing (see Intro., fig. 8) from the Sanchi gates. The form moves again toward the kind of natural-



ism seen in the Maurya period, though the surfaces here are markedly softer. A sense of weight again pervades the figure as it swings to the side, the curving contours of the thigh and the arched girdle providing smooth and easy counter-rhythms that flow in harmony with the body's shapes. The figure thus stands endowed with a lithe and radiantly sensuous beauty unparalleled in Indian art. In the bracket figures of Sanchi, the female form comes fully into its own as an artistic subject.

4. The First through the Third Century A.D.

8

Śrī Lakṣmī, the Goddess of Fortune and Abundance

First century A.D.
Mathura, Uttar Pradesh
Red sandstone, 110 x 27 cm.
(43¼ x 10⅝ in.)
National Museum, New Delhi
B89
Literature: Coomaraswamy 1929

THE IMAGE OF Śrī Lakṣmī has a globular pot at the base from which issues a column of lotus flowers, foliage, and buds, and a pair of peacocks perched on a leaf in the center at the rear. In front, with each foot resting on a rounded flower, is the goddess of fertility and wealth. Her association with the lotus is stressed, for she is not only supported by this flower, but her whole body adheres to the plant and is thought of as emerging from it. Depicted as a mature, womanly figure of gentle mien, she rests one hand on her breast, the source of milk and human sustenance, while placing the other, holding a twig of leaves, on the girdle just below the navel. The face is gently lowered, very much in the attitude of a mother nursing her child.

Both the iconography and style of the image derived from the Yakṣī figures of Sanchi (see cat. no. 7). The maternal ideal of female beauty is endowed here with the same heavy, languorous grace, but is carved in a more complex manner.

The function of this image is not known. The top of the pillar, leveled off at a later time, may have once supported a bowl or similar object, a feature preserved in some other images of this type.

9

Yakṣī with Fanlike Hair

First century A.D.
Kankali Tila in Mathura, Uttar Pradesh
Red sandstone, 54 x 8.5 cm.
(21¼ x 3⅜ in.)
State Museum, Lucknow J598
Literature: Smith 1901; Vogel 1930

BOTH SIDES OF what was once a supporting bracket, similar to the type found at Sanchi, are carved with images of Yakṣīs. The figures both have one hand raised above the head holding the branch of an *aśoka* tree, the other hand in all probability once rested on the hip. The image on the better preserved side has a gorgeous coiffure, the braided hair coiled in ten rolls that fan out behind the head in an elegant swirl. The forehead ornament is a crescent moon held in place by beaded strings. The background foliage is rendered with remarkable skill, each trembling leaf endowed with weight, volume, and brisk, surging movement. Though the round face ("moon-shaped") and a breast are damaged, and the portion below the waist is missing, the image is in much better condition than its counterpart on the reverse. There, too, the leaves and flowers exude the same nervous energy.

cat. no. 9, front



cat. no. 9, back





cat. no. 8



10
Yakṣī Donning a Garland
Early second century A.D.
Bhutesar in Mathura, Uttar Pradesh
Red sandstone, 124 x 31 x 28 cm. (48⅞ x 12³⁄₁₆ x 11 in.)
Indian Museum, Calcutta
Literature: Cowell 1895; Vogel 1930

FIVE MONOLITHIC POSTS, which once formed part of a railing, were discovered in 1871 by General Cunningham at Bhutesar in Mathura and are commonly regarded as outstanding examples of the Mathura school (Cunningham 1873, 23-25). All have representations of Yakṣīs, but none of them is associated with a tree, as is traditional. Rather, they are shown simply participating in the pleasures of life, dressing and adorning themselves or playing with pet birds. Carved above, in a register demarcated by a railing motif, are amorous or carousing couples.

In the example displayed here, a woman, her head tilting drunkenly to the side, is hanging onto her lover, who clings to his cup of wine. The Yakṣī stands in an elegant and carefree posture, putting a garland of coiled strings of pearls around her neck. The body is animated by a lively rhythm, the face expressive of youthful happiness. There is little about the alert figure to suggest that she is anything but a lovely damsel of the town, except for the grotesque goblin who serves as her vehicle. The increasing secularization of Indian art in this period, when the sacred was often a pretext for the depiction of the secular, is quite evident here, as it is in the marvelous reliefs from Amaravati (see Intro., fig. 2 and cat. no. 19).

On the reverse of the piece are four panels illustrating a Buddhist legend known as the Valāhassa Jātaka. The tale concerns an island inhabited by female goblins, whose practice it was to entice shipwrecked men with offers of food, drink, and other allurements in order to take them as husbands. Unfortunately, when another ship was wrecked, the perfidious creatures would accord the same treatment to the new arrivals and throw their husbands into a house of torment before devouring them. A merchant finally realized the true state of affairs and tried to persuade his companions to flee with him, abandoning the seemingly good life. This is shown in the top panel, where a man is addressing a group of people from the top of a tree within the walls of a city. The merchant was able to persuade only half the men, and these were ultimately rescued by the Buddha-to-be, who had

assumed the form of a flying horse. This is depicted in the central panel, where two men cling to the back of the horse and another pair holds onto its legs. In the lowermost panel is a pair of goblins dallying with their consorts. Just below are two large female heads with tongues extended, representing the goblins devouring their victims. This was the fate of those who did not heed good advice.

Simple in conception and execution, the reliefs lack the vitality of the Yakṣī image. Narrative relief was not carefully cultivated in Mathura at this time. The poor workmanship displayed here can be contrasted with the narrative reliefs of the earlier gates of Stupa I at Sanchi, and with the sophisticated contemporary rendering at Amaravati (see Intro., fig. 2 and cat. no. 19), where this type of work reached its fullest and finest expression.



11 **

Yakṣī Holding a Flower

Second century A.D.
Manoharpura in Mathura, Uttar Pradesh
Red sandstone, 83 x 18 cm. (32⅝ x 7⅛ in.)
Government Museum, Mathura
33.2345

THE PROJECTING PIECE and sloping cut at the top of this work indicate that it once formed part of a staircase balustrade. The sculpture shows a young woman in profile, leaning against an *aśoka* tree. Her pose refers to the ancient belief that a tree will not bloom unless struck by the foot of a woman. The woman holds a flower and looks at it, head lowered in thought. Her slender body is tenderly modeled, the restrained and delicate contours reinforcing the pensive and wistful mood. As in other fine works of Mathura sculpture, the emotion does not reside merely in the expression of the face, but permeates the whole body. The carefully arranged foliage, piled delicately in still volumes, further enhances the quiet atmosphere of reverie in which the sculpture is steeped.

When this image is compared to the heavier handling of form evident in the Kankali Tila and the Bhutesar Yakṣīs (see cat. nos. 9 and 10), it is clear that the Mathura sculptor did not hesitate to strive for diverse and varied effects, all of which he achieved with seeming ease.

12

Kubera, God of Wealth and Prosperity

Early second century A.D.
Ramnagar/Ahicchatra, Uttar Pradesh
Red sandstone, 97 x 46.5 cm. (38¼ x 18¼ in.)
National Museum, New Delhi 59.530/2
Literature: London 1982

THIS SCULPTURE WAS discovered at Ahicchatra (modern Ramnagar), a site identified with the capital of ancient Pāñcāla, though on the basis of the stone and style, one can assert that it was imported from Mathura, about two hundred miles to the southwest. This is not surprising, as works of Mathura origin have been found at much greater distances and from all over north India, including distant Taxila in the Punjab (now in Pakistan) and Chandraketugarh on the coast of Bengal. This widespread diffusion is one indication of the dominant position and influence of Mathura art during this period.

The corpulent divinity shown seated here is Kubera, the god of wealth and prosperity and lord of the earth's treasures. His body is dominated by an immense stomach that flows over the girdle and rests against the left thigh. A fold of flesh connects the stomach to the chest, the body barely able to cope with its vast burden. The lips are gently parted, as if the figure were out of breath because of its imposing weight. This superb, portraitlike image very appropriately exudes a sense of satiated well-being. The theme established by the Pitalkhora Yakṣa (see cat. no. 6) is continued here, but this version suggests a sculptor keenly aware of the artistic possibilities of a well-observed depiction of obese mass.

Years of affectionate caresses bestowed on the irresistible paunch have stained it dark with the oil of human hands. This has the effect of visually distorting the relationship between the stomach and the rest of the body, which flow much more easily into one another than is immediately apparent.



13
Maitreya, the Future Buddha
Second century A.D.
Ramnagar/Ahicchatra, Uttar Pradesh
Red sandstone, 66 x 24 x 11 cm. (26 x 9 7/16 x 4 5/16 in.), excluding the tenon
National Museum, New Delhi
59-530/1
Literature: Mitra 1955

THE SCULPTURE WAS discovered built into the wall of a temple at Ramnagar, Uttar Pradesh, adjoining which are the remains of the ancient city of Ahicchatra. In spite of its discovery at that location, the material as well as the style suggest that it was almost certainly manufactured at Mathura.

Though small in size, the form is monumental (cf. cat. no. 14), radiating energy and power. Maitreya stands erect, the weight of the body thrown equally on the two legs. He wears a lower garment that reaches to below the knees and is secured to the waist by a flat girdle. The transparent garment clings to the legs and the genitals, revealing their shape; one end falls between the feet, cascading out in broad, swirling pleats toward the bottom. A long scarf sweeps across the leg, over the arm, and curves over the shoulder to fall along the side of the body. The strongly modeled torso has a deep navel that emphasizes the fleshiness of the belly. One arm is raised to the shoulder in the gesture of granting freedom from fear while the other holds a flask at the waist. The hair, done in curls, fits closely to the head, the topknot visible above the forehead. The circular halo has a scalloped edge, the points representing rays of light.

14
Bodhisattva
Late first to early second century A.D.
Probably Mathura district, Uttar Pradesh, exact provenance unknown,
Red sandstone, 165 x 76 cm. (65 x 29 7/8 in.)
National Museum, New Delhi
A 40
Literature: Vogel 1910; London 1949

THE HANDS AND HEAD of the image are missing, but otherwise the image is well-preserved and depicts a Bodhisattva, who in the Buddhist pantheon is a compassionate divinity on the way to becoming a Buddha, but who has either not realized that exalted state or has renounced it because of a desire to redeem creatures from their suffering.

The representation is full of power and epitomizes the depiction of the male figure in Mathura sculpture of the period. The pose is uncompromisingly frontal, the weight of the body supported equally on the two legs. The feet are set somewhat apart and are firmly planted on the ground. A belt, knotted to the side, secures the lower garment, which is barely visible below the knees; its folded end cascades to the ground, flaring out toward the bottom where it is arranged in regularly meandering pleats. A sheet of stone was left between the legs in order to provide structural strength. Through the cloth of the lower garment, the shape of the genitals is discernible. The massive torso above the legs is locked firmly into the hips and a prominent navel sinks into the stomach. The longer multistranded necklace falls in a flat, V-shape over the expansive chest, while the torque,



cat. no. 13



cat. no. 14

consisting of pearl strands and a central bead, is worn close to the neck. The bunched up cloth with grooved pleats that swings across the legs from the waist to below the knee is part of the upper garment.

As in the case of other images of this period from Mathura, whether of a Bodhisattva (see cat. no. 13) or an exalted Brahmanical ascetic (see cat. no. 15), the forms descend directly from the Yakṣa sculpture of the second and first centuries B.C. (see Intro., fig. 13). They are all assertive, earthy, and extroverted irrespective of the nature of the person depicted.

15

Standing Ascetic

Early second century A.D.
Nadan, Uttar Pradesh
Red sandstone, 227 x 90 cm.
(89⅜ x 35⅜ in.)
Government Museum, Mathura
77.4
Literature: D. Srinivasan 1978-79

THIS COLOSSAL STATUE of a great Brahmanical ascetic was found in the Agra district, about forty-five miles from Mathura. It is a unique example of a human type that looms large in Hindu myth and epic as dominating both men and gods, but is infrequently represented in art, at least not as an independent image (see cat. no. 57).

The figure's posture is frontal, with weight distributed equally on both legs. A skirt, secured to the waist by a rough rope, reaches below the knees where it gently flares outward. The skirt seems to be made of reeds strung together vertically, except for a few stray strands that form looped patterns on its surface. Aside from the sacred thread worn over the left shoulder, the chest is bare. An antelope skin is thrown over the same shoulder. The left hand must have held a water jar, while the damaged right hand, raised to the level of the shoulder, holds the remnants of a rosary. The head, with wound, matted locks of hair, sits on broad, square shoulders. The pointed beard and mustache are both rendered by lightly and freely incised lines. The figure wears no jewelry, the distended earlobes bearing witness to his having worn earrings before taking up his ascetic life. No halo encircles the badly damaged forehead.

Together with contemporary images of the Buddha, this figure is an adaptation of Yakṣa iconography to sectarian purposes. The modeling, too, is of the same type, the fleshy rendering of the forms, with soft areas at the chest and navel, being accentuated by the severe contours of the skirt. In spite of the injury to the forehead, the facial expression is somber and intense, contributing to an image of austere spirituality.





cat. no. 16

16
Male Head
First century A.D.
Mathura, Uttar Pradesh
Red sandstone, 28 x 19 cm.
(11 1/16 x 7 1/2 in.)
National Museum, New Delhi
2827
Literature: London 1949

PORTRAITURE AS AN art does not seem to have found much favor with Indian sculptors, so that surviving examples are quite rare. These are more in the nature of idealized rather than realistic representations. One of the finest pieces is this massive head from Mathura, which must have once formed part of a life-size image. It is carved entirely in the round, with full lips, a handlebar mustache, and thin-lidded eyes. The hair, visible over the neck and at the temples, is covered with a richly decorated turban, which is tied by a plain, narrow band.

The modeling stresses volume; the surface is alive with the swelling planes around the mouth and eyes. The treatment of the eyes is delicate; it contrasts with the thick-set features and lends them a certain air of refinement. A master's hand is also evident in the modeling of the turban cloth, as it bulges under the pressure of constricting bands, and in the delicate curl of hair at the temples.

17
Emaciated Head of the Fasting Buddha
Second century A.D.
Probably ancient Gandhāra, now in Pakistan, exact provenance unknown
Schist, 26 x 15 x 15 cm. (10 1/4 x 5 7/8 x 5 7/8 in.)
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi
735

PRINCE SIDDHĀRTHA, WHO became Śākyamuni (the sage of the Śakya clan) or the historical Buddha, began his search for enlightenment by discarding the vestments of his station in life, such as hair knot and turban, rich robes and jewelry, and taking to the path of severe mortification, wasting his body so that he ultimately looked like a skeletal apparition. Sculpture of the Gandhāra school represented the Buddha in



cat. no. 17

this condition and this superb and subtly expressive head is a fine example. The earlobes are prominent and distended, reminding us of the heavy jewels they once bore. The face carries hardly a trace of human flesh; the feeble eyes are sunk in deep sockets; the cheekbones protrude; the cheeks are pinched, and the skin of the forehead is pulled tightly over the skull. The thin lips have, however, not lost their firm resolve. Although the face still breathes, it seems as though every breath may be the last, yet the tension and pain are transcended by an inner, self-contained calm.

Type studies, especially of subjects at stages of life other than their prime, or of those with exceptional or, at times, even aberrant qualities, were quite common in the late Hellenistic style and its offshoots, from which the art of Gandhāra derived inspiration and ideas. And it was perhaps in the context of this association that the Buddha in an emaciated state proved to be of interest to the Gandhāra artist. It is worth noting, however, that no such image of the Buddha is known from other Indian regions and periods, as the general concern in representing the Buddha was not with his appearance at any given moment, but with his eternal, ideal existence. Moreover, depictions of the Buddha in such an emaciated state might have been tantamount to equating him blasphemously with death, and such imagery was usually confined to divinities like Cāmuṇḍā (see cat. no. 47), who are primarily associated with death.

18
Bodhisattva

Second century A.D.
Probably ancient Gandhāra, now in Pakistan, exact provenance unknown
Gray schist, approx. 152.4 cm. (60 in.)
Government Museum and Picture Gallery, Chandigarh



THE IMAGE IS dressed in the attire of the period, which consists of a lower garment with swallow-tailed folds and an upper garment swathed across the body and wound around the shoulder. Executed in typical Gandhāra fashion, they contrast with the work at Mathura (see cat. no. 14) in that they are given a certain substance so that they noticeably cover the body. They are also endowed with pleated folds, rendered somewhat regularly and geometrically. A collar and a longer necklace, decorated with kneeling cherubs flanking a central bead, adorn the figure, and amulet strings pass over the left shoulder. The long hair is combed back, knotted in a loop over the head, and falls over the shoulder in curls. A string of pearls is drawn across the head and circles the base of the hair loop. The plain halo is damaged but indicates the divine status which Bodhisattvas had attained along with the Buddha at this time. The right hand, now broken, probably had the palm facing the spectator in the gesture of granting freedom from fear *(abhaya mudrā)*, while the left hand held an object, now missing. With its drooping mustache, the face simulates a compassionate and serene expression, but is nevertheless frozen and masklike.

19

Women Worshipping the Buddha

Late second century A.D.
Amaravati, Andhra Pradesh
Limestone, 81 x 87 x 14 cm.
(31⅞ x 34¼ x 5½ in.)
Government Museum, Madras



THE BUDDHA IS represented by his footprints placed upon a throne. The woman at the extreme right is on her knees, hands raised above her head in a gesture of adoration. Next to her is a woman who has sunk back on her knees, her torso bending forward reverentially, her forehead touching the palms of her hands. The woman opposite hurls herself to the ground, head bowed low, hair dishevelled, while behind her is yet another woman, whose head is missing and hands are raised in worship.

The four figures move swiftly, almost frenziedly, as they fling themselves before the symbol of the Buddha in passionate devotion. Their contours are delineated by sweeping lines of nervous energy that clarify every nuance of their swaying bodies. The composition is accomplished, the figures skillfully interrelated by gesture and movement.

Sculpture of this phase from Amaravati, adorning the Buddhist stupas at the site, represents the tradition of early narrative reliefs, as initiated at Bharhut and fully developed at Amaravati (see cat. no. 5). Thereafter, the relief tradition ceases to be in favor and never again occupies the Indian sculptor's interest to such a great degree.

20

Torso of a Male Image

Second century A.D.
Tilmulgiri, Andhra Pradesh
Limestone, 84 x 50 x 29 cm.
(33⅛ x 19⅝ x 11⅜ in.)
Archaeological Museum, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh

The body is gently flexed at the waist so that the weight is thrown on the left leg. A transparent lower garment that outlines the genitals is secured at the waist by a girdle. The upper cloth, which is folded and pulled across the thighs, is tied in a massive knot at the waist.

The sculpture is carved in subtle, mobile planes that play softly upon the surface of the voluminously modeled torso. To this extent the work contrasts with contemporary sculpture at Mathura (see cat. no. 14), in which the forms are strong but subtle. In its restlessness the torso reminds one of reliefs at Amaravati (see cat. no. 19), the qualities of which are subsumed here in a single shape.



21

Torso of a Standing Buddha Image

Third century A.D.
Nagarjunakonda, Andhra Pradesh
Limestone, 122 x 52 x 24 cm. (48 x 20½ x 9⁷⁄₁₆ in.)
Archaeological Museum, Nagarjunakonda 39

THE HILL OF Nagarjunakonda and the valley in which it is located comprised the site of Vijayapurī, the capital of the kings of the Ikṣvāku dynasty who ruled the area in the third and fourth centuries A.D. The ruins were first excavated from 1924 to 1931. The prospect that the entire site would be submerged by the construction of a great dam and reservoir led to full-scale excavations, beginning in 1954 and continuing for six years. The antiquities discovered are now housed in a museum erected on the island top of Nagarjunakonda hill.

Among the ruins of the many Buddhist monasteries, temples, and stupas of the ancient town of Vijayapurī were numerous works in a style closely related to work at Amaravati (see Intro., fig. 2 and cat. no. 19), ninety-five miles to the east. What remains of this superb Buddha, is relatively well-preserved. One end of the drapery thrown over the left shoulder is pulled over the raised left arm and falls straight down the side, causing the hem to lift slightly and form a heavy swag. The cloth is pleated with precisely carved folds, that sweep around the body to converge at the chest and then fan out over the shoulder and back, forming patterns of a chaste and simple beauty.



5.
The Fourth through the Sixth Century A.D.



22**

Buddha

Mid-fifth century A.D.
Mathura, Uttar Pradesh
Red sandstone, 146.7 cm. (57¾ in.)
Indian Museum, Calcutta
Literature: Pal 1978

A NEW STYLE, which coincided to some extent with the rise of the Gupta dynasty (fourth to sixth century) in north India, began to take shape during the second half of the fourth century and achieved maturity by the second quarter of the fifth. It marks a drastic transformation from what can loosely be called the earthy, extroverted forms of early Indian sculpture, as they had existed for over five hundred years (third century B.C. to the third century A.D.), to forms that are expressive of a meditative, introspective spirituality. Mathura seems to have taken a leading part in the development of this style, in which the spiritual and the sensuous, the inner religious vision and its representation in an image, are brought into harmony.

This figure of the Buddha is one of the finest examples of this period. When compared with earlier work from Mathura, it is immediately evident that the bulkiness of the latter has been reduced, the obesity of the flesh dissolved, so that the image is no longer a Yakṣa in monk's clothing, but a representative of the transcendent master of the Law, a being who is beyond pain or pleasure and who has meditated upon and comprehended the miseries of existence. The calm face with downcast eyes no longer confronts the spectator, but contemplates an inner life. The modeling of the body, whose smoothly flowing forms are defined by rhythmical contours, is in keeping with the spiritual nature of the work, yet the figure is full of strength and quiet power, a characteristic of this phase of Mathura art.

The Buddha's lower garment is wrapped around the waist and reaches to just above the ankles. A monk's robe with string folds covers both the shoulders, the hem curving across the body and falling over the arms. The right hand, now broken, was held in the gesture of granting freedom from fear (*abhaya mudrā*). The head rests on a neck with triple folds and the earlobes are distended. The hair is arranged in rows of curls and the cranial protuberance, a mark of the superhuman being, is prominent.

23

Male Torso

Mid-fifth century A.D.
Jaisinhapura in Mathura, Uttar Pradesh
Red sandstone, 95 x 45 cm. (37⅜ x 17¾ in.)
Government Museum, Mathura 50.3532
Literature: Williams 1982

THIS MAGNIFICENT IMAGE, though damaged, is a work of the highest quality, and epitomizes the Mathura style of the fifth century, very much as cat. no. 14 embodies characteristics of work executed at the same site in the previous period. A comparison of the two pieces is helpful in order to understand the great change of style and mood that takes place between one period and the next.

A calm strength resides in the expansive volume of the torso; its light and subtle modeling suggests a gently breathing surface. The thighs and legs have this same restrained power, as do the broad shoulders. A subtle delicacy is also seen in the handling of the folds of cloth along the inner edge of the thigh and in the curled end of the garment, which is pulled up and tucked into the girdle. The rich jewelry consists of three necklaces: a simple string of pearls; a central jewel flanked by delicately swirling foliage and festooned with pearls; and, the most elaborate of all, a torque of coiled strings of pearls issuing from addorsed crocodile *(makara)* heads at the center. The hair falls over the shoulders in elegant curls. The effect is one of considerable richness, but without ostentation; and throughout the image there is a perfect balance of form and ornament.

A careful examination of the image also reveals the artist's masterly observation and truthful rendering of detail. The coiled pearl strings rest a little loosely and freely on the chest, as they would in real life. Similarly, the looped ends of the girdle are subtly modulated so as to echo delicately the contours of the thighs over which they fall. The weight of the body is held by the liquid lines of the contours that flow smoothly from the armpit to the knee, firmly uniting the torso to the thighs. This rhythm is accentuated by the curving forms of the necklaces, the gentle dip of the girdle, and the sharp swing of the upper garment as it sweeps across the legs. All is done with great ease and confidence, the work of a master in total command of his art.

It has previously not been possible to identify the god or man represented by this image. A recent suggestion (Williams 1982, 71) that it is an image of the god Viṣṇu may be correct.



24

Viṣṇu

Mid-fifth century A.D.
Almost certainly from Mathura, Uttar Pradesh, but exact provenance unknown
Red sandstone, 105 x 68 cm. (41⅜ x 26¾ in.)
National Museum, New Delhi E 6
Literature: Vogel 1910; Agrawala 1945

ALTHOUGH THIS IMAGE does not possess the same masterful and lively rendering of detail as cat. no. 23, it belongs to the same tradition and shares many features. The body and its ornaments complement one another, and a similar curvilinear rhythm informs the figure. The image must have had four arms, for remnants of two arms are visible at the left elbow. The regularly pleated lower garment is secured by a simple girdle, the two looped ends of which fall over the thighs. The upper torso is bare save for two necklaces and the sacred thread *(yajña pavita)*. One necklace consists of a string of large, graduated beads and the other of coiled pearl strings. The double sacred thread with sprays at the jeweled clasp falls almost vertically over the left shoulder and thigh. Remnants of a large garland *(vanamālā)* wind around the arms just below the armlets. The neck has conventional triple folds, and the dignified and somber head, with its arched eyebrows, gently lowered eyes, full lips, and curving cheek planes, possesses the same calm and introspective aspect as all other images of this period. Here, Viṣṇu's cylindrical crown is elaborately decorated with a jewel embedded in a floral scroll as well as by pearl festoons sprouting from the mouths of crocodiles *(makaras)*. Above it, a circular plaque bears a lion's head, which also emits a string of pearls. Traces of a damaged halo can still be seen at the back.



25

Śiva as Half-Man and Half-Woman (Śiva Ardhanārīśvara)

Early fifth century A.D.
Gosna well in Mathura, Uttar Pradesh
Red sandstone, 33 x 17 cm.
(13 x 6 11/16 in.)
Government Museum, Mathura
15.772
Literature: Vogel 1930; Sharma 1976



DISCOVERED IN A well, this is the remaining fragment of a complete image. It represents the god Śiva in half-male and half-female *(ardhanārī)* form; he occupies the right half and the left half is his consort Pārvatī. For those Hindus who believe Śiva to be the ultimate manifestation of divinity, he is the whole universe. And this single form of Śiva is intended to convey the message that what is divine is neither one thing or the other, but All. Another, less sectarian way of expressing the notion of divine completeness is through the triumvirate: Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva, in which Brahmā is the Creator, Viṣṇu is the Sustainer, and Śiva, the Destroyer. While examples of the triad together as a major image are rare, all are frequently allotted positions at the top of the temple door, no matter which divinity is enshrined. All are associated with consorts (the Goddess or Śakti), who manifest the god's energy, his active power being, at the same time, a means of bringing the divine to this world and an example of divine operation in it. Symbolically, this work represents the doctrine of 'divine bi-unity', in which all polarities, such as male and female, life and death, and manifest and unmanifest are ultimately resolved.

It is apparent that the left side is the female half from the coiffure, which is typically that of a woman, with the segment of a large bun at the top, a large curl at the part, and a smaller series of curls at the side. The large earring serves to draw our eye to these details. In contrast, the right side of the head is bereft of an earring and the locks of hair are pulled back, piled in layers on top of the head, and fall over the shoulders in a manner preferred by male ascetics, of whom Śiva is the archetype. The third eye is carved on the forehead and, with the other two, signifies Śiva's ability to see through time, though it is also associated with the preternatural powers of sages, among whom Śiva is the ideal.

The form is entirely plastic, not only in the smoothly swelling and receding planes of the face, but also in the details of the coiffure, most notably in the piled up curls on the shoulders and the three tiers of looped hair on the male half of the head. The modeling is fluent, displaying keen observation and convincing representation. The expression is quietly meditative with a hint of tenderness, no doubt due to the presence of Pārvatī, who is worshipped as the mother of the universe.

26

A Woman Startled by a Scorpion

Fifth century A.D.
Probably Mathura, Uttar Pradesh, exact provenance unknown
Red sandstone, 76 x 34 x 27 cm. (29⅞ x 13⅜ x 10⅝ in.)
Indian Museum, Calcutta 25021



COMMON IN BOTH art and literature, the motif of a woman startled by a scorpion is a poetic conceit that celebrates the beauty of the female body as it is revealed under a variety of accidental circumstances. We see it here in a fifth-century rendering, which in theme and style is a development of the kind of work typified by the Mathura Yakṣīs of the previous period (see cat. nos. 9-11).

Only the lower half of this sculpture has been preserved. The woman's brisk, twisting motion accentuates the folds of flesh at the waist and causes the long chain necklace and its pendant to swing over the right thigh. It has also caused the lower garment to slip away from the waist, although this could have happened in the woman's attempt to cast off the scorpion. The nervous flutter of folds along the edge of the skirt, where the garment has begun to peel away from the body, reinforces the sense of agitated movement. A scorpion is shown in the narrow band of cubic rocks carved in relief on the pedestal.

Although the forms are full, a quick, gliding line characterizes the contours. Together with the soft, diffuse shadows shaping the limbs and the thin, sensitive lines outlining the garment, they create a work of art of singular individuality and accomplishment.

27
Seated Buddha
Inscribed in the year 109/A.D. 429
Mankuwar, Uttar Pradesh
Buff sandstone, 77 x 49 x 22 cm. (30⅜ x 19¼ x 8⅝ in.)
State Museum, Lucknow
Literature: Fleet 1888; Sircar 1970; Williams 1982

THIS SUPERB IMAGE was found in 1870 in a garden at Mankuwar; it had apparently been brought there from a nearby brick mound. The simple pedestal is supported by two lions. In the center is a spoked wheel symbolizing the Buddhist Law *(dharmacakra)*, flanking which are two Buddha images with palms resting in the lap in the traditional gesture of meditation *(dhyāna mudrā)*. The main figure is seated directly on the pedestal, legs crossed and locked at the ankles in the so-called yogic posture. The Buddha wears a lower garment, indicated by the raised ridges over the calf and carefully pleated folds of cloth laid out below the feet. The upper part of the body is bare; the left hand rests in the lap and the right hand, with the palm facing the spectator, is in the gesture of granting freedom from fear *(abhaya mudrā)*. The neck has the usual triple folds and the face is quiet and somber. However, only the hairline is visible over the forehead, making it appear as though the Buddha were wearing a cap, and the monastic robe, which generally covers the body, is also absent. I am unable to explain these unusual iconographic features, though it is possible that the hair and possibly the robe were originally painted in. That images were indeed touched with color is proved by traces still preserved on some examples.

The style of the image anticipates the mature work of Sarnath as seen in cat. nos. 28-30, but it lacks the sinuous grace and elegance. Though Mathura influence is apparent in the strength and clarity of the work, the ample surfaces of the torso are treated with much greater economy and can be clearly related to images in the Sarnath style. Indeed, some very similar images have been discovered from Sarnath, and it is possible that the Mankuwar Buddha may have been imported from that site. The carving of the figures on the pedestal is hardly as accomplished as that of the main image and must have been done by another hand, probably an apprentice.

Dated sculptures, which are critical to the scholar for establishing the development of style, are quite rare in this period. This example has always been considered very significant, not only for its beauty, but also for its precise date of manufacture, which until recently was thought to be the equivalent of A.D. 449, but is now firmly established at twenty years earlier. The inscription on the top and bottom ledges of the pedestal is in late Brāhmī characters and reads:



Line 1. *om namo budhāna bhagavatō samyak-sambuddhasya sva-matāviruddhasya iyaṁ pratimā pratiṣṭhāpitā bhikṣu-buddhamitreṇa*
Line 2. *samvat* 100 0 9 *mahārājaśrīkumāraguptasya rājyē jyeṣṭhamāsa di* 10 8 *sarvvaduḥkkhaprahānārttham*

TRANSLATION: *Om! Reverence to the Buddha! This image of the holy one, who attained complete and perfect knowledge, whose doctrines are uncontroverted, has been installed by the monk Buddhamitra with the object of averting all unhappiness. The year* 100 0 9, *in the reign of the king, the effulgent Kumāragupta, in the month Jyeṣṭha [on] the eighteenth day.*

28
Standing Buddha
c. A.D. 475
Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh
Buff sandstone, 114 x 49 x 19 cm.
(44⅞ x 19¼ x 7½ in.)
Indian Museum, Calcutta
S 18/8250/85

SARNATH, NEAR VARANASI, was as important a center of art in the fifth century as Mathura, situated at the opposite end of the heartland of ancient India. For Buddhists, Sarnath was endowed with particular sanctity, for it was in the deer park there that the Buddha preached his first sermon and set in motion the Wheel of the Law *(dharmacakra)*. Sarnath possessed important monuments and works of art as early as the Maurya period, the most famous of which is the lion capital that has become the state emblem of India. Artistic activity continued there for almost the next two thousand years, with the late fifth century being a period of particular brilliance. After the site was devastated in the late twelfth century by a new wave of invaders from the northwest, it was more or less abandoned.

Unlike Mathura, the ruins of Sarnath were not subjected to later human settlement, so that exploration and excavation were relatively easy. Nevertheless, plundering threatened the remains at the site. The Maurya stupa, for example, provided building material for a whole new community known as Jagatganj in nearby Varanasi as late as the eighteenth century. The chance discovery of reliquary caskets during this disastrous undertaking caused much excitement among antiquarians, resulting in further unfortunate despoliation. Alexander Cunningham, later the first director-general of the Archaeological Survey of India, excavated the ruins of Sarnath from 1834-36, and made the notable find of a large hoard of stone sculpture in a room to the northwest of the Dhamekh stupa. Cunningham presented the objects to the Asiatic Society in Calcutta, which later transferred them to the Indian Museum. Thus, the sculpture exhibited here could well belong to the first major discovery of artistic significance at Sarnath. One would think that Cunningham's work would have marked the beginning of the site's preservation, but unfortunately this was not the case. The sculpture he left behind was dumped into the river by an enterprising English official to protect the piers of a nearby bridge. Despite attempts at what may charitably be called systematic excavation, the site continued to be pillaged, with serious attempts at conservation and excavation beginning only in the first years of this century. These resulted in a further understanding of the history of the site and yielded large numbers of objects, several of which are shown in this exhibition.

The Buddha stands with the left knee gently bent, the



body gracefully flexed three times along the central axis. In Sanskrit this pose is called *tribhaṅga* (triple-bent). The lower garment is visible just above the ankles. The upper garment covers the whole body, including the shoulders and arms, but is barely noticeable, except at the hem. A thin incision at the waist demarcates the girdle. The right hand is held in the gesture of granting freedom from fear *(abhaya mudrā)*, the fingers connected to each other by a thin webbing of stone. The face is calm, relaxed, and introspective, with the gentlest of smiles playing on the lips. The distended earlobes are without earrings. Rows of curls cover the head and the sacred cranial protuberance *(uṣṇīṣa)* that projects from it. The half-preserved halo has a scalloped edge, indicating rays of light, while the other circular bands are filled with decorative motifs, such as the lotus rhizome and the pearled rope.

If we compare this image to the Buddha from Mathura (see cat. no. 22), we notice that although the figures share the same meditative and spiritual expression characteristic of all works of art of this period, the Sarnath school possesses a distinct individuality. Apart from the absence of string folds in the robe, which is not as significant an element as was once thought, the full swelling forms characteristic of Mathura are absent; the surface here is flatter and rendered much more subtly and abstractly. This imparts to the image an even greater ethereality. At the same time, the livelier movement and gentler expression make the image less aloof and reveal the compassionate nature of the Master.

The Sarnath style achieved maturity around A.D. 475, as is demonstrated by two images bearing dates equivalent to A.D. 474 and 477 (Rosenfield 1963). The high phase at Mathura seems to have occurred a few decades earlier.



29

Buddha head

Late fifth century A.D.
Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh
Buff sandstone, 25 x 14.5 cm.
(9⅞ x 5 11/16 in.)
National Museum, New Delhi
47.20

FEW HEADS FROM Sarnath rival the perfection of this example which must have once adorned a life-size image of the Buddha. The head itself is ovoid, but the outline of the forehead, which dips in the center, gives it a pronounced heart-shaped aspect. The planes of the cheek, relatively flat and restrained, rather than full and bulging, as in contemporary work at Mathura (see cat. no. 22), connect the forehead to the chin in an uninterrupted sweep. The lips are full, the upper one distinctly bow-shaped, the lower modeled with swelling resiliency. The nose is gently aquiline. The upper eyelids have a pronounced droop in the center so that all we see of the eye is a narrow opening that flashes across the face, enlivening its calm expanse. The gently curving eyebrows are barely defined. The ears, with distended lobes, curve away from the face in counterrhythm, while the top of the head, with its rows of curls, gives strength and texture to the rest of the piece, not only accentuating its smoothness, but also binding its elements together.

30
Standing Avalokiteśvara
c. A.D. 475
Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh
Buff sandstone, 136 x 38.5 cm. (53½ x 15⅛ in.)
National Museum, New Delhi
49.113
Literature: ASIAR 1904-5; Sahni 1914

Bodhisattvas constitute a group of Buddhist divinities who are fully capable of becoming Buddhas, but out of compassion, choose to dedicate their existence to the emancipation of the universe. This particular example represents the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, who may be identified by the seated Buddha in his crown. He is shown standing on a lotus flower that issues from a cluster of swirling foliage. From this same source emerges a stalk, now mostly missing, which must have terminated in the full-blown flower held by the divinity.

Avalokiteśvara's body sways gently to the right, its weight shifted on the right leg, giving the figure the same subtly flexed posture as cat. no. 28. The dress consists of a lower garment that clings to the legs and is secured to the waist by a jeweled girdle. Rather than being worn over the body, the upper garment is coiled, looped across the waist and thigh, and tied in a large knot to the side, from which fall two pleated ends. Resting against this knot is the damaged palm of the missing right arm. The hair is coiled in strands that are pulled back and tied in an elaborate knot on top, the loose ends falling in delicate curls over the shoulder. The simple jewelry consists of a decorated fillet above the forehead, earrings and a bracelet, a necklace of beads with an oblong spacer, and a very long sacred thread in the form of a thin chain, falling from the left shoulder almost to the knee. The circular halo has all but disappeared. At the base of the statue are two small, skeletal figures, emaciated spirits with heads upturned to receive the nectar of immortality shed from the Bodhisattva's fingers.

When it was discovered in the 1904-5 excavations at Sarnath, this image was broken at the knees and neck. These areas have been repaired, as has the left arm. This extremely graceful work resembles the image of the Indian Museum Buddha (see cat. no. 28), except that the proportions here are more elongated. The Sarnath idiom is evident in the rather flat treatment of the coil of cloth tied across the thigh, with the preference for linear clarity rather than sculptural volume displayed in the deliberately rendered curls over the shoulders and in the neat design of the coiffure (cf. cat. no. 25 from Mathura).

The pedestal has a Sanskrit inscription which reads as follows:



oṁ deyadharmmoyaṁ paramopāsakaviṣayapati suyāttrasya yadattra puṇyaṁ tadbhavatu sarvvasatvānām anuttarajñānāvāptaye (Sahni 1914, 118-19).

TRANSLATION: *Om. This is the dutiful gift of the most devoted layman, Suyāttra, the chief of a district. Whatsoever merit may accrue from this, let it be for the attainment of supreme knowledge by all sentient beings.*

31

Standing Tārā

Late fifth century A.D.
Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh
Buff sandstone, 100 x 41 x 17 cm. (39⅜ x 16⅛ x 6 11/16 in.)
Archaeological Museum, Sarnath
Literature: Sahni 1914; Rosenfield 1963

THIS FINE IMAGE representing the Buddhist divinity Tārā, the feminine counterpart of a Bodhisattva, was discovered to the south of the main shrine at Sarnath during the 1904-5 excavations. The weight of the body is thrown gently on the right leg, so that it is imbued with the same rhythm as the other fine examples from the Sarnath school. The lower garment is hardly visible, and an equally sheer upper cloth, the hem of which is clearly visible over the right breast and left thigh, is drawn across the body and left arm, falling at the side in pleated folds. The jewelry is rich, yet delicate, and consists of a multistranded girdle, festooned armlets, and a series of three necklaces. One of these is made up of graded beads with an oblong central spacer, the second of coiled pearl strands, and the third, of strings of pearls that pass between the breasts and cross over the waist. Large circular earrings adorn the ears. Although the face is damaged, the gentle meditative expression remains. The elaborate coiffure consists of several rows of ringlets and curls arranged over the forehead and to the side of the head, all topped by a large bun. A fillet decorated with a tall central plaque, the beaded bands of which are concealed by the first row of curls, is worn across the forehead. A swath of folded hair rests on the right shoulder, while a few loose locks stray over the left. The tall halo, which backs the entire body, has a scalloped edge with a pearled margin. In the left hand the figure holds a ripe pomegranate, which has burst open to reveal a row of seeds.

This image has the same elongated proportions as the Sarnath Avalokiteśvara (see cat. no. 30), but is even more masterfully executed. The modeling of the legs and torso is tender, reticent, and of the utmost delicacy. The shimmering, soft quality of the cloth, which is practically invisible, is skillfully suggested by its trembling outline. The same keen observation is seen in the rendering of the body surfaces, the puffy swath of hair resting on the right shoulder, the freely tumbling ringlets over the forehead, and in the shape and texture of the promegranate. In the Sarnath context, and in a more lyrical strain, this image approaches the same high quality found in the *Male Torso* from Mathura (see cat. no. 23).



32
A Pillar
Late fifth century A.D.
Bhitari, Uttar Pradesh
Buff sandstone, 202 x 31 x 30 cm. (79½ x 12³⁄₁₆ x 11¹³⁄₁₆ in.)
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi

Bhitari, a village in the Ghazipur district of eastern Uttar Pradesh, is celebrated as the site of an inscription of the emperor Skandagupta (r. A.D. 455-75) of the Gupta dynasty, recording his victories over various enemies, including the powerful Hūṇa invaders from the northwest, as well as recounting the installation of an image of Viṣṇu. This fine pillar is part of a temple that once existed at this location.

The column has a square, tapering lower shaft, more than half the size of the whole. It rests upon a base that consists of a pot overflowing with flowers and foliage *(ghaṭa-pallava)*, supported by plump dwarfs at the corners. It is clasped at the top by a band of rectangular panels, each containing the lively representation of an animal or bird with a floriated tail. Above these are lunettes with representations of Yakṣas or other creatures. Next is the short octagonal section, girdled by broad floral bands of great vivacity, made up of grotesque, leonine heads *(kīrttimukha)* emitting pearled festoons. Eight truncated lotus medallions alternating with blue lotus flowers make up the next section. The sixteen-sided section that follows is plain, but has petal tips followed by a narrow circular necking and a circular row of lotus petals. These support a squat pot-and-flower capital similar to the base. At the top is an impost block that carried the weight of the beams.

The transition from a square to a circle by multiplying the number of sides is a fairly common feature of pillars of this period, particularly in north India. The carving of the ornament is superb: spontaneous, assured, and clear, and, in spite of its playful exuberance, is confined within strictly delimited spaces. The architectonic integrity of the pillar is thus preserved. It is regrettable that the temple to which it belonged is gone.

33
An Unidentified Scene
Late fifth century A.D.
Bhitari, Uttar Pradesh
Buff sandstone, 66 x 80 cm. (26 x 31½ in.)
Department of Archaeology, Banaras Hindu University
Literature: Indian Arch. 1968-69

This sculpture was discovered at Bhitari, Ghazipur district, during the course of excavations conducted by Banaras Hindu University from 1968-69. Several figures stand within a pavilion, whose roof moldings with dormer window decorations are supported by two pillars. In the center is a man whose head and body are covered by a thick cloth. He offers a child to the outstretched hands of a woman. She is accompanied by a female attendant, who raises a finger in a gesture of astonishment. Behind the man is a fierce, grimacing figure holding a club. Two dwarfs occupy the lower section



of the panel. One bends to the side and turns his back to glance in the direction of the child; the female dwarf in the center holds what looks like a tray. At first sight, the subject appears to be the exchange of babies at the birth of Kṛṣṇa, but there are several difficulties in accepting this interpretation.

Narrative relief sculpture began to die out in north India from about the first century A.D., as the artists' focus shifted to individual images. A fragment such as this outstanding relief panel demonstrates that ancient skills were not entirely lost, for it possesses the same flowing movement, rhythmic contours, and restrained modeling as the best works of the period.



cat. no. 33
left: cat. no. 32

34

Standing Buddha

Probably sixth/seventh century A.D.
Possibly Bihar, exact provenance unknown
Bronze, 68.6 cm. (27 in.)
The Asia Society, New York.
Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd Collection
1979.8
Literature: Pal 1978

THE BUDDHA IS shown standing with the weight of the body on the left leg and the right knee bent, the posture sending a light ripple of movement throughout the body. The figure wears the usual lower garment and the monastic robe, which passes over the shoulders and covers both arms. The edge of the robe cuts lightly across the calves, and the ends are draped over the hands, terminating in sensitively rendered folds, a little more complex on the left side than on the right. The looped string folds of the robe are softly modeled, but are placed with geometrical precision, particularly over the right shoulder. The head is rather heavy, with full cheeks and a broad brow. The hair is rendered by rows of fairly sharp curls, which cover the cranial protuberance, and the hairline, which dips gently in the center, gives a heartlike shape to the face. The right hand is raised in the gesture of granting freedom from fear, with a thin sheet of metal between the fingers. The left hand, with sensitively curved fingers, holds an end of the robe.

The provenance of the image is not known. On grounds of style, it would appear to be the Bodh Gaya region (ancient Magadha) in western Bihar, about eighty miles from Sarnath, which was an important artistic center from Maurya times. The style of this region owes much to the latter site, but favors a more massive and weighty rendering of form. The gentle sway of the body, the clearly protruding section of the stomach below the navel, the striated waist, and the basic heart-shaped structure of the head are all of Sarnath inspiration (see cat. no. 9). Nevertheless, the forms are characteristically fuller and heavier, confirming a Magadha provenance. This conclusion is further strengthened by the obvious similarities to other images from the Bodh Gaya region (see Asher 1980, pl. 137). The presence of string folds on the robe, a feature that also occurs at Mathura, is in no way inconsistent with this provenance, for these features are also found at Magadha and in eastern India in general.

This impressive work of art, dated to the sixth or seventh century, foreshadows a development that led to the great bronzes produced in eastern India from the eighth century onward (see cat. no. 59).



35
Śiva as Half-Man and Half-Woman

Late fifth century A.D.
Nachna, Madhya Pradesh
Sandstone, 79 x 46 x 19 cm.
(31⅛ x 18⅛ x 7½ in.)
Feroze Mistry Collection,
Bombay

THIS DAMAGED SCULPTURE represents the same aspect of Śiva as seen in an example from Mathura (see cat. no. 25), except that much more of it has been preserved. The right half is male, the left half, female. The weight is shifted on the left leg, accentuating the feminine shape of the hip; on the same side is a softly rounded breast. A girdle, collar, and a necklace, which branches into two loops over the waist, adorn the figure, and the hair on the female side is arranged in small, compact curls and tied on the top in a bun. The hair of the male side represents the matted locks of the ascetic god and is carved with great assurance, being thrown back loosely and allowed to fall in waving loops to the shoulders. Two front arms, graceful in shape, are nestled into the broad, manly shoulders of the arms in the back. This unique method of rendering a four-armed image has a subtle elegance in its application to this merging pair. Here, two limbs becoming one is hardly more obvious than one becoming two. A greatly mutilated bull, on whom Śiva leans, is placed to the side.

This image exhibits the lyrical and emotional character of the style of this area. Its light shapes, which clearly contrast with the weight and plasticity of Mathura sculpture, derive instead from the abstract work of Sarnath, located closer to this site.





36

Deer Resting under Rocks

Late fifth century A.D.
Nachna, Madhya Pradesh
Sandstone, 40 x 36 x 13 cm.
(15¾ x 14⅛ x 5⅛ in.)
Lent by Pupul Jayakar,
New Delhi
Literature: Agrawala 1961

NACHNA IS THE site of an extremely important late fifth-century temple dedicated to Śiva. A striking feature of this shrine is the cyclopean character of the tall platform and the outer walls (now collapsed), the stone cut and chiseled to give the appearance of a mountain with caves and grottoes sheltering plant and animal life.

This small sculpture of four deer belonged to this wall and was found near it. Before the large, horned male seated to the right, are two smaller does, one resting with a foot crossed over the other. Another doe sits behind, the alert head, now damaged, turned backward. Above are large boulders suggesting the rocky cavity in which the animals seek shade.

The Indian sympathy for and sense of shared existence with animal life are rendered here with unusual spontaneity and intimacy. The sculpture is the product of a relaxed moment, innocent and free. It is a delightfully personal expression of a life entirely at ease with nature and its creatures.



37
Standing Buddha
Late fifth century A.D.
Phophnar, Madhya Pradesh
Bronze, 76 x 20 cm. (29⅞ x 7⅞ in.)
National Museum, New Delhi
L 656
Literature: Venkataramayya 1962

Phophnar, a small village near the city of Burhanpur, is situated in the East Nimar district on the border of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. Its location is important, for its proximity to the famous cave temples of Ajanta, one hundred miles to the southwest, explains many stylistic features of a unique hoard of bronzes discovered there in 1964. These include seven Buddhas and five metal umbrellas, all unearthed accidentally during ploughing of a field close to what appear to be ancient brick buildings. Several of the images bear inscriptions, all, unfortunately, lacking dates; they are, however, in southern Brāhmī characters, that have a marked resemblance to fifth-century inscriptions at Ajanta. The pedestal of this work bears a small, mutilated inscription in cursively incised characters. The initial words, *deyadharmmo yaṁ nāgacāri vira,* tell us that the sculpture was the gift of a person named Nāgacāri (Nāgācarya).

The base of this image, which is the largest of the hoard, has a tall pedestal, decorated below with fretted, four-petaled flowers. From its top at the center rises the plain stem of a relatively small lotus, with a projecting, flat-topped pericarp on which the Buddha stands. One of his knees is bent gently and the right hand is raised in the gesture of reassurance *(abhaya mudrā)*. The folds of the monk's robe cover both shoulders, forming a collarlike fold at the neck. The cloth clings to the body, revealing its broad shoulders and graceful shape. Folds are indicated by gently curving striations over the shoulders and chest and delicate furls between the legs. The front edge of the robe is pulled up a little higher than the back and falls lightly from the hands to form a gentle point between the legs. This variation of the conventional rendering of drapery indicates an individualistic hand. The large head has a rather small face and a prominent cranial protrusion *(uṣṇīṣa)* covered with several rows of tiny curls of hair.

The umbrella above the figure was found separately and may not belong to it. Flanking its staff are two cherubs with fluttering scarves; they hold a tilted wreath of a type seen in the paintings of Ajanta.

38

Architectural Ornament

Mid-fifth century A.D.
Mukandara, Rajasthan
Limestone, 74.5 x 121 x 20 cm.
(29⅜ x 47⅝ x 7⅞ in.)
Museum and Saraswati
Bhandar, Kota
Literature: Williams 1982

THIS ORNAMENT IN the shape of an ogee arch, with wings at the side and a cavity in the center, simulates an open window (*candraśālā* in Sanskrit). Found on almost all early Indian architecture from the third century B.C. onward, the motif has been revived in modern times. Beginning as a fairly straightforward representation of an actual window, the idea evolved into an increasingly ornate decoration, finally serving as a tiny unit in a complex, lacy pattern that covered large surfaces, particularly temple superstructures, in the manner of creepers or vines.

In this example the circular niche contains the figure of a nude drummer, who sits on a cushion, legs crossed, with a round drum perched on his lap. He strikes the instrument with a pair of sticks, one straight, the other curved, tilting his head and shoulders in concentration. The swift, bouncing contours, now angular, now curved, express visually the rhythm of the music.

The figure is framed by a floral design emerging from the mouths of aquatic animals *(makaras)* with sharp claws, one of which is raised to rest against the frame. The curling, upturned tails of these creatures sprout floriated forms that fill the wings. Undulating rhizomes emerge from the powerful, raised heads and terminate in a central *aśoka* flower. From the nodules of the stem spring more foliage and flowers, which spread out to cover the entire space.

The carving stresses the plastic quality of the work, endowing the forms with a soft and feathery effect. This may be contrasted with the brisk movement and crisp chiseling that characterize ornamental work from Bhumara (see Intro., fig. 18).



39

Pārvatī as the Wife of a Wild Hunter

Fifth century A.D.
Samlaji, Gujarat
Schist, 80 x 40 x 17 cm. (31½ x 15¾ x 6¹¹⁄₁₆ in.); base, 15 cm. (5⅞ in.)
Museum and Picture Gallery, Baroda
Literature: Shah 1960

Śiva and his consort Pārvatī once assumed the form of a wild mountain hunter *(kirāta)* and his wife in order to test the valor and devotion of the epic hero Arjuna. This sculpture probably formed part of a pair depicting the two deities. The goddess Pārvatī leans to the side, resting her right hand on an outthrust hip. An animal skin tied in a knot at the waist forms the lower garment, and a piece of cloth is thrown around the thighs. Anklets and a simple necklace comprise the jewelry. The disheveled hair falls in unruly curls over the shoulders. The rounded face has wide eyes, an open mouth, and sharp canine teeth, which attest to the fierce tribal affiliations of the goddess in this particular guise.

The figure's stocky, ample body is characteristic of sculpture of this period from north Gujarat and adjacent areas. So, too, is the treatment of drapery, which, with its rippling folds, has a substance of its own. The modeling of the body emphasizes the tactile, with the soft folds of flesh at the waist reminiscent of earlier periods. The animal behind the goddess resembles a dog, and the remains of a halo can be seen behind the head.

The school of sculpture represented by this image favored a soft, deep blue stone, and its works exhibit very pronounced local features. It has not been studied intensively, so that many problems regarding its history and evolution remain unresolved.


Ac.2548.

40

Śiva in the Form of a Dwarf

Late fifth century A.D.
Mansar, Maharashtra
Sandstone, 85 x 65 cm. (33½ x 25⅝ in.)
National Museum, New Delhi
L77/2
Literature: Sivaramamurti 1976; London 1982

THE SEATED FIGURE leans against a large bolster placed at the back of a flat cushion. In the two right arms are a heap of flowers and a circular string of beads. The upper left hand holds the stem of an object that is now lost; the lower hand, closed in a fist, rests on the raised knee. An end of the lower garment is spread out over the cushion in overlapping folds. Twisted cloth is wound around the potbelly, which is separated from the chest by a roll of flesh. The jewelry consists of a snakelike anklet and a massive strand of twisted pearls. The necklace has an elaborate pendant suspended from a string of circular plaques; a large, circular earring, invariably worn by his consort Pārvatī, rests on the shoulder. Loose locks issue from the conical coil of hair and fall down the side of the head. A crescent moon, flowers, and a crowned skull also adorn the hair.

Śiva is shown here as a corpulent dwarf. The heavy face has a double chin, a wide mouth, broad nose, and large eyes marked with pupils. But the identification of the figure presents problems, for the form of the body suggests a dwarf attendant of Śiva rather than the god himself. However, Sivaramamurti (1976) has drawn attention to the Śatarudrīya, a celebrated Vedic text in which allusions are made to the dwarf form of Śiva, and this unique image may be related to some such conception. The crescent moon in the hair is a typical feature of Śiva, and like the third eye, is related to the imagery of the passage of Time, as are skulls.

The discovery of this sculpture at Mansar, a site not far from Nagpur, and of yet others in the same general area, establishes the existence of a distinct school in the Vidarbha region during the fifth century. It promises to be as accomplished as the poetic style of the area, as employed by the great poet Kalidasa and celebrated by Sanskrit rhetoricians.



41

Two Dwarf Attendants of Śiva

Mid-fifth century A.D.
Nagardhan, Maharashtra
Sandstone, 25.4 x 50.8 cm.
(10 x 20 in.)
Central Museum, Nagpur



cat. no. 41b
right page: cat. no. 41a

The corpulent dwarf (41a) crouches on the ground. His heavy stomach is separated from the fat chest by a thin ripple of flesh. His hands rest on his knees, which are barely able to support the great weight of his body. He is goggle-eyed, as though stunned by his own weight. Heavy earrings rest on his shoulders and his unruly hair is parted in the center and tossed to the sides.

His companion (41b), the personification of obesity, has tumbled backwards on his own weight, a leg flung in the air as he seeks the support of a rock. The rounded stomach, fully stretched, is about to burst. The head tilts backward, the mouth is open, and the expression is one of satiated stupefaction.

The dwarf attendants of Śiva, effervescences of his own erratic energies, are a rowdy, mischievous lot, full of buffoonery. They accompany their master wherever he goes. They are favorite subjects of the Indian sculptor, who often shows great freedom, humor, and whimsy in carving their forms. The two examples shown here might be the finest expression of the lot.



42

Buddha

Sixth century A.D.
Hamlapuri, Maharashtra
Bronze, 56 x 23 x 19 cm.
(22 x 9 1/16 x 7 1/2 in.)
Central Museum, Nagpur

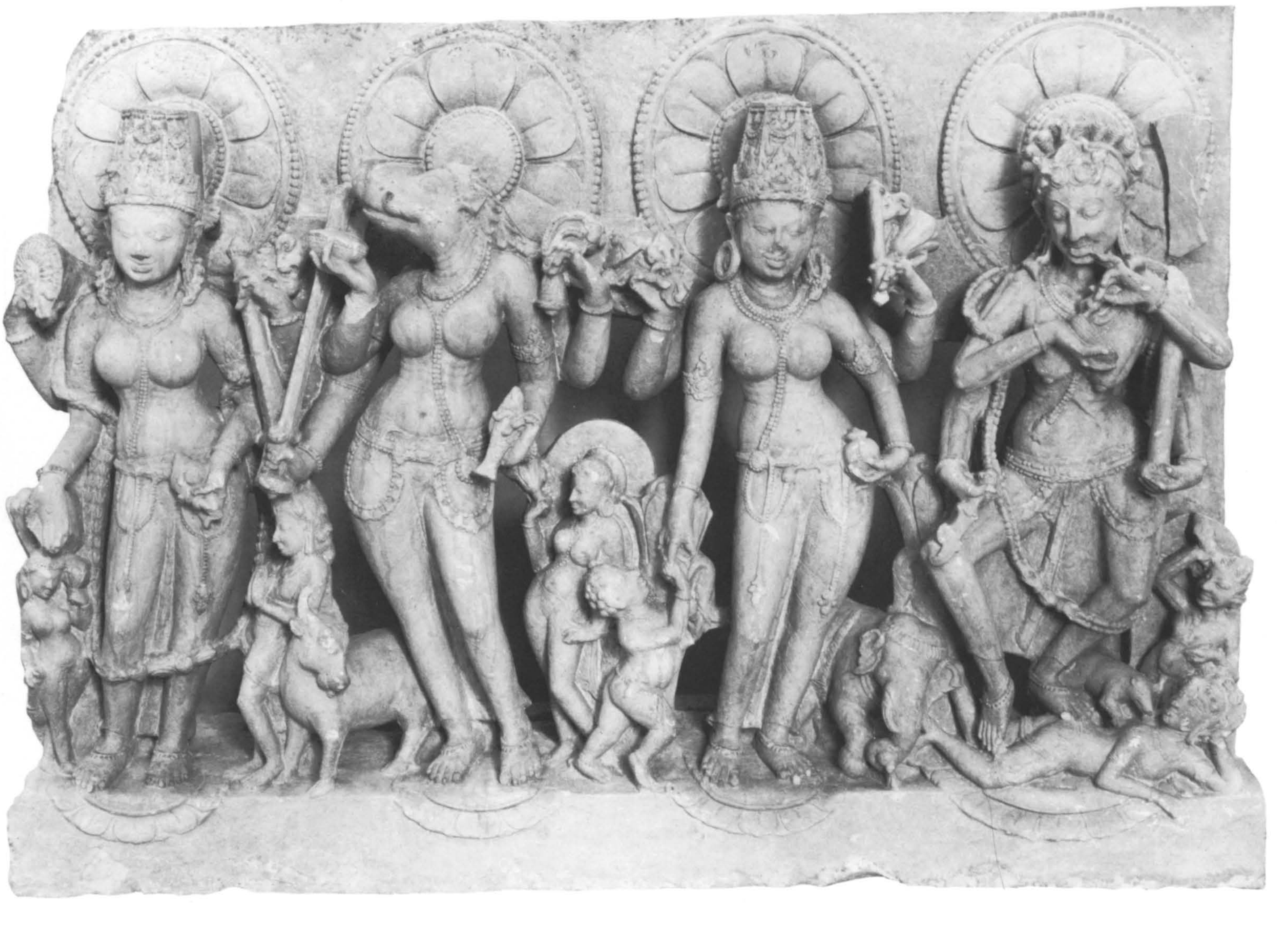
The Buddha is standing with the right knee bent, the left leg bearing the weight of his body. He wears a monastic robe of flowing folds. Delicately rendered, they spread over the entire body, reinforcing its soft contour. The cloth falling between the body and the arms is also sensitively pleated, contrasting with the crisp, banglelike folds above the left hand. The right hand is in the gesture of assurance, with traces of sheet metal joining the fingers to one another. The eyes have drooping lids and pointed ends, and the sacred mark *(ūrṇā)* on the forehead is emphasized, as are the large curls of hair. The head and hands are too large for the somewhat slight body.

This image has some affinity with the Sarnath style in the light, abstract treatment of the torso, but the handling of the folds is distinctive. Although it recalls the style of Mathura, the resemblance is very slight, the workmanship being much freer. A date of the sixth century is suggested by the squat proportions, which characterize late works of this period.

The provenance of a very similar image, found long ago at Dhanesar Khera in Banda district, Uttar Pradesh (Smith 1895), has provoked discussion among scholars, yet no consensus has ever been reached. However, in view of this find, the region of Vidarbha in Maharashtra can now be considered a strong possibility.



6.
The Seventh Century Onward



43

Four Mother-Goddesses

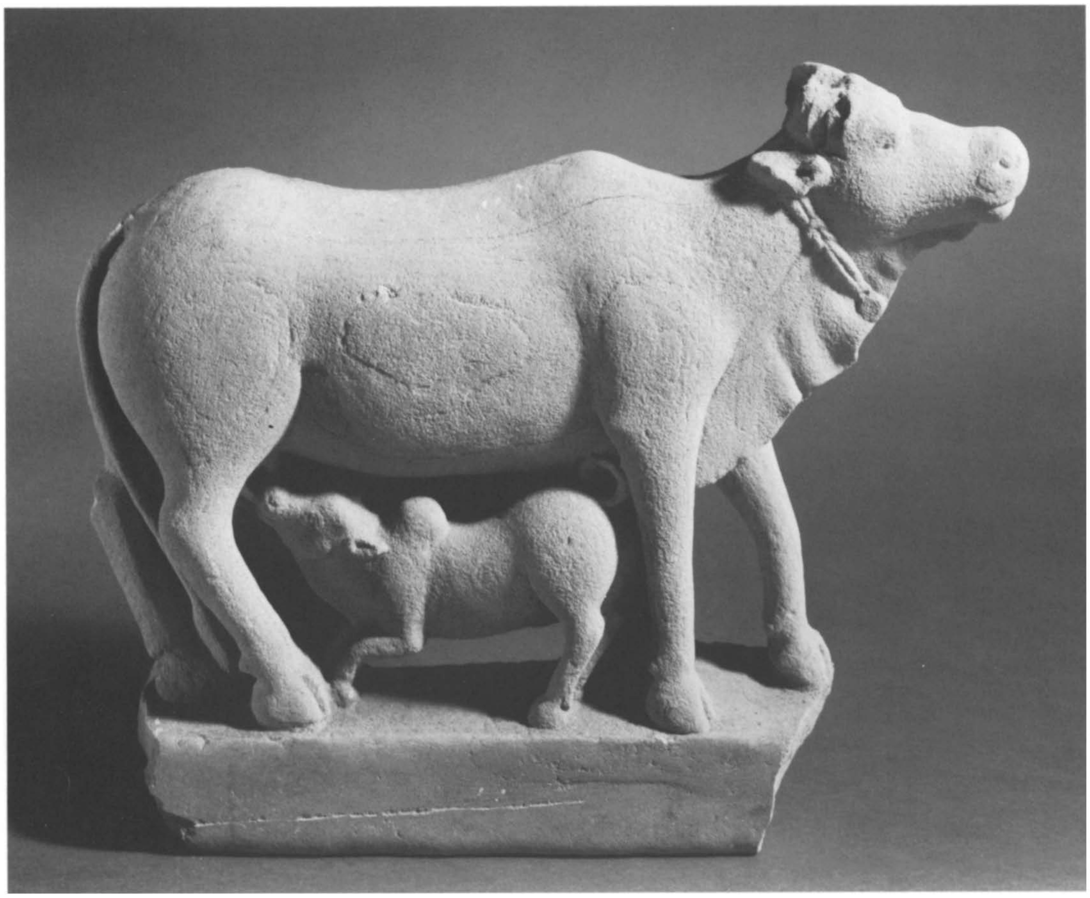
Mid-ninth century
Kannauj, Uttar Pradesh
Sandstone, 114 x 77 x 13 cm.
(44⅞ x 30⅜ x 5⅛ in.)
Puratattva Samgrahalaya,
Kannauj

MOTHER-GODDESSES ARE generally represented in groups of seven. Here, three images have been broken off and are missing. Beginning from the right, the first figure is the fierce and emaciated Cāmuṇḍā, who dances on a prostrate figure being gnawed by a porcine animal. She holds a bowl, whose contents she stirs with a finger, as well as a curved dagger, the blade of which has a piece of human flesh stuck to it. Next to her is the crowned Indrāṇī, holding a lotus and the *vajra* weapon in her upper right hand and an elephant goad and blue lotus in the upper left. A pomegranate rests in the palm of the lower left hand, while a prancing child clings to the fingers of the lowered right hand. At her feet is her vehicle, a crouching elephant struggling to rise. The boar-faced Vārāhī, with a sensitively rendered snout and hair cascading down to the shoulders, holds a sword, a bowl raised to her mouth, a ball, and a fish. She is accompanied by a gracefully swaying attendant who holds a flower. Her vehicle, an alert and somewhat skittish buffalo, stands at her feet. The last image is Vaiṣṇavī, who holds a discus, a mace, and a conch, the right hand lowered in the gesture of bestowing gifts *(varadā mudrā)*. The small male figure to her left, hands folded in adoration and leaning on Vārāhī's buffalo, is probably her vehicle Garuḍa; on the opposite side is a female figure holding a flower.

All the goddesses stand on lotus flowers with petals drooping over the edge of the stone. They also have the same lotus halos ringed with beads. The exquisitely carved jewelry, consisting of looped girdles, necklaces with strings of pearls falling between the breasts, earrings, and other ornaments, is similar for all the figures. Two goddesses also wear elaborate crowns.

The sculpture is remarkable for its liveliness. Both the main figures and attendants are imbued with graceful rhythms and are skillfully linked to each other by the inclination of their bodies, the attitudes of attendants and vehicles, and the gestures of their hands. The iconography is conventional, but great individuality is evident in the closely observed rendering of the figures and animals; the work is clearly that of a great master.

The image exemplifies the high achievements of the Indo-Gangetic valley, particularly the Kannauj area, during this period. Unfortunately, the city suffered such destruction that only stray finds like this one testify to its glorious past.



44
Cow and Calf
Early ninth century
Probably Uttar Pradesh/north India, exact provenance unknown
Pink sandstone, 52.1 x 67.3 cm. (20½ x 26½ in.)
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Lenart
M.73.87.2

HEAD HELD UP alertly and ears tensed, the cow shelters the nursing calf between her legs. The body is carved with the utmost economy, the smooth curving planes giving shape to the somewhat elongated body. The slender legs are fashioned with similar simplicity. The modeling of the head is very sensitive, the expression tender but unyielding as the cow stands guard over her young.

The Indian's legendary love for the cow finds perfect expression in this sculpture. Freedom from canonical prescriptions for subjects of this type permitted a sympathetic identification with animal existence and created a work that carries spontaneous and immediate conviction.



45
An Amorous Couple (mithuna)
Eleventh century
Probably from the Khajuraho region, Madhya Pradesh, exact provenance unknown
Sandstone, 74.0 cm. (29⅛ in.)
The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland. Purchase Leonard C. Hanna, Jr., Bequest 82.64
Literature: Pal 1977

THE AMOROUS COUPLE is a motif found in Indian art beginning from at least the second century B.C. Its meaning derives from the close association of the beautiful and auspicious with the fertile and productive. Thus, it enjoys the same popularity as the lotus ornament and a host of other symbols, such as the overflowing pot, Yakṣas, and animals, including *makaras* and elephants, that reside in the water or are connected with it in some way. Amorous couples are not directly associated with the Waters, but because the birth and growth of the human race originates from them, they, too, are regarded as auspicious and worthy of depiction on sacred buildings (Coomaraswamy 1928-31).

The earliest representations are generally symbolic, a man and woman simply standing side by side. In the course of time, and in keeping with the evolution of art, the pair is shown in increasingly physical intimacy. Finally, in the medieval period, they are represented fairly frequently on temple walls, engaged in sexual intercourse. Considered a perfectly normal human activity, the thought that this act should not be depicted on sacred architecture seems never to have occurred to the Indian sculptor. Indeed, canonical texts encourage the representation of couples engaged in sexual activity.

This example shows a mature, bearded man embracing a woman from behind, one arm thrown over her shoulder and angled sharply to rest on her breast. With the other hand, he tries to pull aside her garment. Even though she holds onto an end of the cloth in resistance, she pulls his face down by the hair and lifts her own to receive a kiss.

The angular contours and hard modeling are consistent with the style of the area and period. Nevertheless, the mood invoked is one of tender intimacy, the two figures enmeshed by an intricate geometry of line.

46

Dancing Gaṇeśa

Ninth century
Probably western Madhya Pradesh/Rajasthan, exact provenance unknown
Quartzose arenite, 125.7 cm. (49½ in.)
The Asia Society, New York. Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd Collection 1979.13
Literature: Lee 1975

The elephant-headed Gaṇeśa, a son of Śiva, is a beloved divinity in India. He is worshipped with much enthusiasm and great festivals are organized in his honor, particularly in Maharashtra. Gaṇeśa is a destroyer of obstacles, a dispenser of wealth and wisdom, and a bestower of success.

Here the god is shown swaying, his body bent like a bow. His ten arms whirl around him, with the fingers posed in the stylized gestures of the dance. Others hold his attributes, which include a rosary, a snake, and a broken tusk. The trunk swings to the side, touching a large, ball-shaped sweet cupped in the lower hand. This movement echoes the curve of the body and the bent left leg; the right leg, flung to the side, taps the lotus ground to the beat of the drums. The pairs of musicians to the sides concentrate on the music; the cymbal player and drummer on the right look away from one another, each absorbed in his own performance. On the left, the two work together, one looking up at the dancer as he brings his hand down sharply on the drum. The celestial figures above join the performance.

Depicting the multiarmed, full-bellied god as a dancer is always a challenge to the sculptor, and one that has been met here with great success. The relatively simple jewelry, from the tie of the girdle dangling on the thigh to the curving pearl festoons of the crown, reinforces the movement of the dance, as do the gliding contours of the massive, yet agile body.

Śiva, Gaṇeśa's father, is, in one of his more benign moods, Lord of Music and Dance, an extension of his role as Master of Time and its divisions, its cycles and rhythms. It is interesting that his love of the dance is shared by his son.



47

The Goddess as Death (Cāmuṇḍā)

Tenth century
Hinglajgarh, Madhya Pradesh
Sandstone, 87 x 54 x 22 cm.
(34¼ x 21¼ x 8⅝ in.)
Central Museum, Indore 2/194
Literature: Garg 1982

THOUGH THE LEGS of the goddess are now missing, it is evident that she is dancing if we compare her to a similar image from Kannauj (see cat. no. 43). The lion pelt wrapped around the waist is fastened by a knot of the skins formerly covering the animal's legs. A serpent, head rearing toward the navel, is loosely coiled around the hips. An equally deadly snake, also endowed with a raised head and sinuous body, serves as the necklace, while a much smaller viper encircles the wrist. A scorpion crawls on the emaciated belly between the exposed ribcage and the flat, withered breasts. Only one of the four hands survives, and it seems to hold a fish. The remaining portions of the arms and the neck are mere bundles of bones. The face has unexpectedly full cheeks, but a horrific countenance is evoked by the bared teeth of the wrinkled and contorted mouth, the protruding eyes, and the large garland of skulls and bones. Often seen as the source of life, the Goddess appears here as death, devouring all that she has produced.

Cāmuṇḍā is often represented in the art of this period, but seldom with such telling effect. The wasted, emaciated body is made even more disquieting by the lifelike rendering of the poisonous serpents and scorpion. The sense of the macabre is also enhanced by the skull-and-bone necklace rattling stiffly around the body.



48

The Demon Rāvaṇa Shakes the Abode of Śiva

Eleventh century
Hinglajgarh, Madhya Pradesh
Sandstone, 83 x 56 x 25 cm.
(32⅝ x 22 x 9⅞ in.)
Central Museum, Indore
Literature: Garg 1982

RĀVAṆA, THE DEMON lord of Laṅkā, found his path obstructed as he flew near Mount Kailāsa, the abode of Śiva. On learning that the god had forbidden entry to all so that he might sport undisturbed, the enraged demon, proud of his great strength, tried to uproot the mountain by shaking it with his powerful arms. The inhabitants were frightened by the great commotion and even the goddess Pārvatī clung to Śiva in fear. The god was unmoved, however, and pinned the mountain down with his big toe, imprisoning the presumptuous Rāvaṇa for a thousand years. But the demon was a devotee of Śiva at heart, and invoked his grace to secure release.

This celebrated mythical incident is represented here. Śiva sits on a lotus, his lowered right leg holding the mountain in place. His wife, perched on his lap, clings to him with a hand thrown across his shoulder. The two deities wear lavish, but delicately carved jewelry that makes abundant use of pearls. Śiva's hair is arranged in curls on the forehead, behind which are piled locks of hair secured by a tiara. Serpents, a common attribute of the god, are missing. Śiva and Pārvatī's vehicles, a bull and a lion, peer out from the sides of the lotus seat. The demon Rāvaṇa is shown below with five heads (though he is assumed to have ten), pushing up against the lotus with two of his hands. His two attendants, now damaged, attempt to flee from the turmoil, but are seized by the feet. Behind them are the two sons of Śiva, the elephant-headed Gaṇeśa, and Kumāra, seated on a peacock.

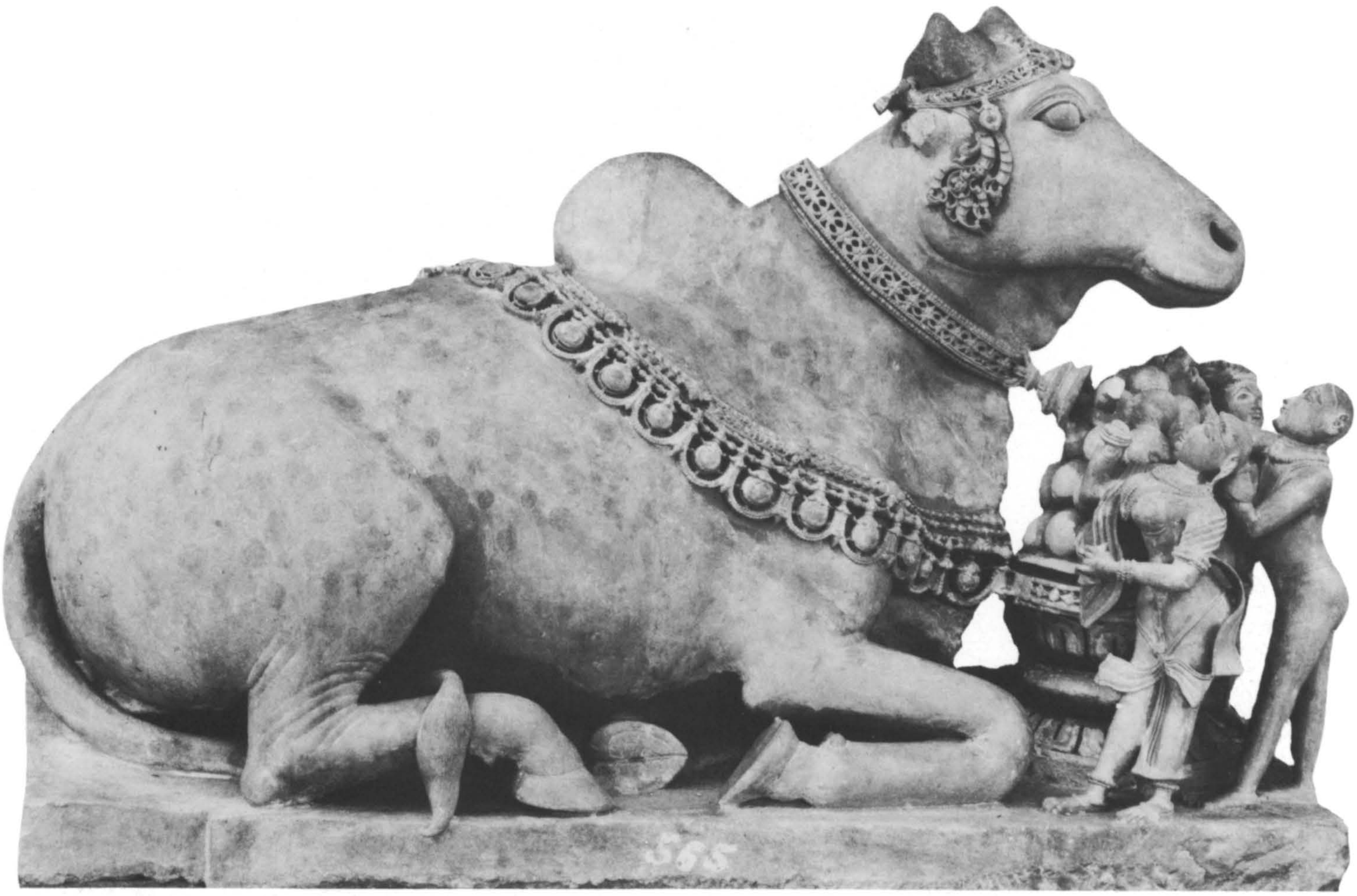
The image is backed by two pilasters whose outer sides are adorned with prancing griffins. Above them are the figures of the god Brahmā, shown with a beard, and Viṣṇu, with a lotus and discus, seated on the backs of crocodilian *makaras*. At the apex of the image is another figure of Śiva playing a musical instrument. He is flanked by flying angelic couples who bear garlands and flowers for worship.

With its rich and crowded composition, this sculpture is an outstanding example of the conventional religious icon that became standard in the medieval period. Whether it be an arched eyebrow or a strand of pearls, the details are carved carefully and precisely. In this respect, this work testifies to the sculptor's skill, as does the appropriately determined expression on Śiva's face. Nevertheless, the forms, stiff and segmented, are overpowered by the jewelry that



decorates them. The figures are static, the movement strained, so that the sculpture, while of superb quality, still shares some of the limitations of the style of which it is a product.

J. SEYLLER



49
The Bull Nandī
Tenth century
Haripura, Madhya Pradesh
Sandstone, 74 x 121 x 53 cm.
(29⅛ x 47⅝ x 20⅞ in.)
Local Museum, Bhanpura 565

THIS IS A splendid image of Nandī, the bull that serves as Śiva's mount. Sculpture of this creature is often placed in temples dedicated to the god. The seated bull has a prominent hump and a large tail tucked under the body, the tip flung lazily over a leg. The disciplined animal form is powerful yet gentle, an impression enhanced by the calm head. The large beaded and festooned belt running from the hump to the forequarters reinforces the gentle movement of the sculptural surface. A bell swings from a jeweled band encircling the neck, pressing into the frilled dewlap to emphasize its soft texture. Placed before the bull are a large bowl, piled high with balls of food, and lively worshippers, one ringing a bell, another making offerings. The bull's disinterest in these attempts to attract his attention is rendered playfully and shows the sculptor's understanding of the animal's nature.



50
A Rising Elephant
Eleventh century
Mandhata, Madhya Pradesh
Sandstone, 114 x 114 x 65 cm.
(44⅞ x 44⅞ x 25⅝ in.)
Central Museum, Nagpur

THE ELEPHANT TILTS forward as it rises to its feet. Its enormous girth is spanned by great ropes that establish the shape of its massive body. The trunk is coiled, and the ears flap backward. The figures of two riders, one to the front and the other to the back, have broken off. Beaded garlands circle the forehead, and a belled chain dangles over the front leg.

Close observation of the lumbering body of the elephant as it struggles to stand finds sophisticated expression in this image. Unconstrained by canonical authority, the sculptor grasped the momentary pose and rendered it with felicitous ease (see cat. no. 66 for a miniaturized representation of the same subject in bronze).

51

Śiva as Bhairava

c. A.D. 900
Probably Shahdol district, Madhya Pradesh, exact provenance unknown
Sandstone, 156.2 x 66 cm. (61½ x 26 in.)
Thakur Saheb of Sohagpur Collection, Shahdol
Literature: Stadtner 1982

As THE WRATHFUL Bhairava, taking, perhaps, too much pride in his power as destroyer, Śiva cut off the head of Brahmā, the Creator, thus committing the dreadful sin of slaying a brahmin *(brahmahatyā)* and upsetting the balance of the universe. For his crime, he was condemned to roam the earth in a rage, both terrifying and terror-stricken. The skull of the slain god stuck to his palm and became his begging bowl, and he wandered in this condition until he reached the holy city of Kāśī (modern Varanasi), where the skull fell from his hand as he was cleansed of his sin. However one might interpret this story, notes on pride, penance, and expiation would seem to be at its heart. That the Lord of Destruction was not slain for his crime would indicate his importance in the process of regeneration.

The four-armed Bhairava stands in a triple-bent posture on a lotus, the stem of which is flanked by circular clumps of foliage. He holds a bowl, a bell, and a large, stout staff. The knobbed end carries an exquisitely carved skull with a gaping mouth, bulging forehead, and small, hairlike bumps on the cranium. From the base of the staff sprouts a tiny scroll of leaves. The short lower garment is secured by a girdle, partially covered by the protruding belly; its elaborate, pendant bands are looped gracefully over the thigh. A serpent serves as one of the necklaces. The broad sacred thread reaches to the thighs, while a long, ornamentalized skull-and-bone garland extends to the knees. The head has protruding eyes, a grimacing mouth, and a third eye in the center of the forehead. Arranged in a double row of ringlets over the brow and concentric circles behind the head, the hair is circled by a band adorned with a central skull and a twisting serpent head, Śaiva emblems for divisions of time, as are the three eyes.

Five female worshippers are arrayed to the god's right: two seated, three standing, one of them a small girl. They fold their hands in adoration and carry a fly whisk and flowers. A similar group of four appears on the left in positions of prayer, with no trace of fear on their calm countenances.

At the back of the stele are two tapering pilasters crisply carved with a waving floral pattern; prancing griffins border their outer edge. Crocodiles *(makaras)* and an exquisitely floriated scroll framing the jeweled halo further enrich the area above the crossbar, which consists of a triple molding. Celestial worshippers scatter flowers from either side. Together with the female devotees below, they impart an



atmosphere of joyous festivity, which mitigates the ferocity of the image. Similarly, the very fine workmanship eases the sense of dread and doom lurking below the surface. The artist has kept the ambivalent nature of Śiva, at once destroyer and protector, very much in mind. Death, however frightening, creates the space for life.

52

Fragment of an Image of Cāmuṇḍā

Late ninth century
Probably Gurgi, Madhya Pradesh
Sandstone, 79 x 32 x 34 cm. (31⅛ x 12 9/16 x 13⅜ in.)
Central Museum, Bhopal 889

It is unfortunate that the major portion of what must have been one of the greatest of all images of the goddess Cāmuṇḍā is irrevocably lost. The figure of the Goddess has disappeared almost entirely, leaving only a withered forearm, which holds the head of a demon who has just died. A gentle smile continues to linger at his lips, as though he were quietly savoring the prospect of death and immediate release at her hand.

Below the demon's head, which is lifeless, yet rendered with smooth, tactile volumes and undulating planes, is a contrasting composition of tense and attenuated ghoulish shapes, the very epitome of horror and death. These tangled, chaotic figures are the bloodthirsty spirits that follow the Goddess in order to devour the slain. One of them, supported by a kneeling figure, has flung one hand over his shoulder and with unrestrained frenzy drinks blood from the dripping neck. At the base is a gaunt, contorted figure on its back. It strains to rise and pours the contents of a bowl into its open mouth. Above is a standing figure with long, bony legs bent at the knee. His hunched torso leads to a sharply contoured head, the twisted arms again holding an upturned bowl. Next to the row of heads, which once formed part of the Goddess' garland, is the largest of these grotesque figures. It is nude, with a large phallus. One hand is held at the mouth, while the corpse of a helpless victim dangles from the other.

The sentiment of disgust or loathsomeness and hideousness *(bībhatsa rasa)* has an appropriate place in traditional Indian aesthetics. As such, it finds expression in sculpture, but seldom with the direct brutality and unmitigated terror of this example.



53
Garuḍa
Twelfth century
Mandla fort, Madhya Pradesh
Black stone, 107 x 60 x 45 cm.
(42⅛ x 23⅝ x 17¾ in.)
Central Museum, Nagpur

CALLED GARUḌA (the Devourer) because he was once identified with the all-consuming fire of the sun, this creature represents the mythic bird who was chief of the feathered race, ruler of the sky, and archenemy of serpents who inhabited the earth. He is often depicted in the sculpture of this period, either alone, or as the ornithoid vehicle of Viṣṇu. The iconography of this image is traditional: a human body in a kneeling position, wings at the shoulders, and a sharp, hooked nose resembling a beak. A broad, triple girdle secures the checkered lower garment at the waist. The rich adornment of the figure includes a jeweled sacred thread, massive necklaces, and heavy anklets and armlets. Alongside these purely ornamental features are those which refer specifically to Garuḍa's predatory and solar nature. Just as the serpents draped below the ears and across the chest represent his triumph over his archenemies, the snakes, so the fretted rays of the elaborate halo, most of which has been broken off, underscore his connection to the sun. The sharp outlines of the arched eyebrows, bulging eyes, upturned mustache, and narrow beard lend the broad face an impassive, masklike appearance. The face is supported by a thick neck with three clearly delineated folds and is crowned by a multitiered headdress decorated with undercut festoons.

The pronounced geometric form of the sculpture is accentuated by its flat planes, angular contours, and unyielding surface. Parts of the body are harshly joined, a feature particularly apparent in the sharp division of the legs and hips and the torso and abdomen. Whether in high or low relief, the precisely rendered jewelry further segments the distinct units of the body. This tendency recalls, in a curious way, the style of Indian sculpture of the second century B.C. (cf. Intro., fig. 8).

J. SEYLLER



54

Tārā with Attendants

Second half of the eighth century
Sirpur, Madhya Pradesh
Bronze with silver and copper inlay, 38 x 25.7 x 17.8 cm. (15 x 10⅛ x 7 in.)
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles. The Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection, Museum Associates Purchase M.84.32.1 a-d

SIRPUR, IN EASTERN Madhya Pradesh (ancient Dakṣiṇa-Kosala) is a site well-known for its Hindu temples dating from as early as the seventh century, but excavations initiated in 1954 revealed extensive Buddhist remains as well. This was to be expected, as a hoard of Buddhist bronzes, allegedly sixty in number, was reported to have been accidentally discovered there as early as 1939. These images lay unnoticed until 1945, when they fell into the possession of the local revenue official. They were then seen by the Jaina monk Muni Kantisagara, who was able to acquire and publish several examples, including this Tārā image, before it passed into the possession of Muni Jinavijaya and finally to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. The bronze sculpture from the find was further dispersed, but efforts of the Nagpur Museum and the Government of Madhya Pradesh in 1952 and 1956 resulted in the acquisition of eleven more images, including the fine Mañjuśrī image in the exhibition (see cat. no. 55).

The goddess Tārā is seated on a large lotus, which is placed on a platform supported by lions. The right hand holds a fruit, the left grants freedom from fear. The elaborate patterns on the lower garment are painstakingly delineated as are those on the tight-fitting blouse, which is embellished with flowers in silver inlay. Tārā's jewelry, particularly in the complex coiffure, is also rendered in exquisite detail. The standing attendant to the left is similarly dressed, holding an offering of jewels in her cupped hand. The right attendant holds a lotus, the lowered left hand granting gifts.

The throne on which the images are located is rectangular in shape; a conch, a covered bowl, and an incense burner are placed on a central projection that is flanked by serpent kings who carry offerings in large bowls. They stand on the leaves of a lotus plant that is attached to the base; the slender figure of a kneeling devotee is placed on a square plaque. The back of the throne consists of two pilasters secured by a broad, jeweled crossbar with leonine creatures prancing on crouching elephants to the sides. On top of the bar are three plaques, the central one containing a Buddha with hands placed in his lap in the gesture of meditation. The plaque to the right has a figure holding a *vajra* (bolt), and the one to the left contains a male figure grasping the stem of a lotus. All three plaques have finials and are surrounded with flames.

This superb image is the most ambitious and splendid of the bronze sculpture discovered at Sirpur.



55
Mañjuśrī
Second half of the eighth century
Sirpur, Madhya Pradesh
Bronze, 16 x 13.2 x 13.4 cm.
(6⁵⁄₁₆ x 5³⁄₁₆ x 5⁵⁄₁₆ in.)
Mahant Ghasidas Memorial
Museum, Raipur
Literature: M. Dikshit 1955-57

For the circumstances of the discovery of this image, see cat. no. 54, to which it bears the closest resemblance stylistically, particularly in the painstaking treatment of detail. The two images might well be by the same great master.

On the pedestal is a large lotus flower with two rows of petals. Prominent stamens encircle the pericarp that serves as Mañjuśrī's cushion. His right leg rests on a smaller lotus springing from the pedestal and his left hand holds the triple stem of what must have been a blue water lily. The right hand is placed on the knee in the gesture of granting boons *(varadā mudrā)*. Mañjuśrī's striped lower garment is decorated with floral patterns inlaid with silver. His sacred thread, consisting of several strings held together by floral clasps, passes over the right elbow and the back, where it is secured by a buckle. The ornaments consist of anklets strung with tiny bells, coiled armlets, and a necklace, which has an emerald amulet as the central pendant, flanked on either side by a tiger claw inlaid with silver and an ornamental leaf. One of the earrings is circular, the other, a thin sheet of metal, presumably gold, is folded and inserted through a distended earlobe. The coiffure is extremely elaborate, with tiny ringlets framing the forehead, and the rest of the head is covered in curls. Two heavy locks of hair emerge from the sides, one pulled over the back of the head and allowed to scatter over the shoulders. A third lock rises from the center and is looped immediately above the head, where it is tied with a beaded chain. A heavy frontlet consisting of twisted strands of pearls is placed over the forehead and tied at the back of the neck. The slight figure of a kneeling devotee, hands folded in adoration, was cast separately and soldered to the pedestal. He has a light beard and is dressed in a simple lower garment.

In addition to elaborate silver inlay and incrustation with jewels, some areas of the bronze were protected at the time of gilding so that they would retain their coppery color. This may be seen in the petals of the large lotus, the alternating stripes of the lower garment, and the two pendants of the necklace. In its exhaustive precision of detail, the image shows greater affinity to the work of the goldsmith and the jeweler than to that of the sculptor. This is particularly noticeable in the intricate rendering of the jewelry, right down to the looped lids of the emerald amulet. The hair is painstakingly incised, as are the strings of the sacred thread.



Nevertheless, the carving is always light and relaxed and invariably shows direct and close observation of the details reproduced.

The style of the image recalls work from eastern India, particularly Nalanda, but it also demonstrates an artistic individuality. That the work was indeed executed locally is proved by the discovery of goldsmith's tools along with pieces of unfinished images from the excavations of the Buddhist monastic complex.



56

Fragment of a Doorframe

End of the eighth century
Abaneri, Rajasthan
Gray sandstone, 40 x 150 cm.
(15¾ x 61½ in.)
National Museum, New Delhi
69.133
Literature: London 1982

ABANERI, SITUATED APPROXIMATELY midway between Jaipur and Mathura, was the site of a magnificent temple dedicated to Viṣṇu, which now lies almost entirely in ruins. The fragment displayed here probably belonged to a subsidiary temple, all trace of which has disappeared. The superb workmanship, characterized by a clear disposition of neat and elegant forms, is of the same quality as work from the main shrine and dates from the same period.

This architectural fragment is the top portion of a richly carved molding that framed the door of a temple sanctum. The innermost band has crisply carved scrolls with twisting, oblique planes floating on a deeply shadowed ground. In the center of the band above is a flying figure who has seized a serpent with each hand; the serpents' tails are braided to form a regular geometric pattern extending down the jamb. Adding to the intricacy of this configuration are miniature serpents with human torsos, their tails deftly interwoven into the larger design. The uppermost band is divided into square panels, every alternate one filled with a grotesque head, half-lion, half-human, with protruding eyes and floriated scrolls emerging from the forehead and cheeks. This apotropaic motif is the *kīrttimukha,* the terrible face of God, who, as the Sun and Death, both engenders and devours his children (Coomaraswamy in Zimmer 1963, 175). The central panel carries the image of Śiva with his consort, Pārvatī, seated on his lap. Alternate panels, one on either side, are filled with flying couples playing musical instruments and bearing flowers for worship. Elegantly dressed and coiffured amorous couples stand in rectangular panels at the side. Others must have been carved below but are now missing.

57
A Seated Saint
c. seventh century
Gujarat, possibly Sabarkantha district
Probably schist, 66 x 41 x 14 cm. (26 x 16⅛ x 5½ in.)
Collection of Umakant P. Shah, Baroda
Literature: Shah 1972



THIS IDEAL PORTRAIT of an ascetic devotee of Śiva shows a figure seated on a stool draped with a circular rug. The legs are suspended, the feet crossed; the knees project to the sides and are supported by a narrow band *(yoga-paṭṭa)*. Swelling with indrawn breath, the powerful torso is decorated with a broad and flat sacred thread that adheres smoothly to the body. The hands, held just below the chest, delicately grasp a string of prayer beads, and the arms angle outward, their linear placement balancing the crossed legs below. The saint's face, which has a light beard, is sunk in profound meditation, his gaze turned inward. The features are calm and passionless, absorbed in the contemplation of the immortal and the infinite. No earrings adorn the distended ears. The hair is arranged in rows of concentric curls to form a close-fitting cap over the head. Only a pilaster and crossbar with a *makara* head remain from the broken back of the throne, and a plain, circular halo survives behind the head. Two small ascetics, hands raised in worship, kneel at the main figure's feet.

Icons of ascetics are very rare, the earliest now known and largest being the *Standing Ascetic* (see cat. no. 15) in this exhibition. Here, however, concept and image coincide in a work of intense spirituality. The essentially geometric, interlocking forms remove the image from the realm of portraiture and enhance its significance as an abstract symbol of yoga.

The sculpture is alleged to have been discovered at Gadha in the Sabarkantha district of north Gujarat. Whether or not this is correct, there can be little doubt that the image comes from this general area, for it clearly belongs to the same school as *Pārvatī as the Wife of a Wild Hunter* (see cat. no. 39). As stated earlier, the origin and evolution of this extraordinary school remain unresolved. Dr. U.P. Shah, who has studied this field intensely, suggests a date near the early sixth century, but the strong linear composition leads me to suspect that the work is of a later time.

58

The Mother-Goddess Māheśvarī

Mid-ninth century
Probably north Gujarat, exact provenance unknown
Sandstone, 99 x 35 x 20 cm. (39 x 13¾ x 7⅞ in.)
Department of Museology, Faculty of Fine Arts, Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda
Literature: Soundara Rajan and Parikh 1959-62

THIS IMAGE WAS one of ten housed in a dilapidated shed in the village of Vadaval before their discovery in 1959. Although the villagers had lost all memory of the origin of the images, it is probable that they were initially found in the vicinity. This provenance is also supported by the style of the images, whose emphasis on mass is in the tradition of north Gujarat (see cat. no. 39).

The sculpture of Māheśvarī is from a composition of seven mother-goddesses, who were flanked by the elephant-headed Gaṇeśa at one end and by Śiva holding a lute (*vīṇā*) at the other, a popular arrangement during this period. She stands with her right hip tilted gently and left foot pointing to the side and wears a lower garment, which is practically invisible, except for the edge of cloth above the girdle, one end of which falls over the thigh. The prominence of the vulva heightens the effect of nudity and the body's tactile quality is similarly enhanced by the extremely simple jewelry.

The head is turned gently to the right, presumably to relate the figure compositionally to the group of which it once formed a part. The hair is curled back and tied in a massive bun bound by pearl strands. The broken hands once held a staff from which a corpse dangles. A devotee crouching at Māheśvarī's feet throws his raised hands over his arched back, while a hyenalike creature, lurking behind the goddess, bares its teeth. The oval halo with a beaded border surmounts the stele at the back.

The figure possesses weight and volume, the curving planes of the body merging smoothly into one another. This is particularly evident in the modeling of the breasts, which swell from the torso, and in the elegantly balanced legs, whose full, tapering thighs are defined by gliding contours.

J. SEYLLER



59
Avalokiteśvara
Mid-ninth century
Kurkihar, Bihar
Bronze, 71 x 33 x 17 cm.
(28 x 13 x 6 11/16 in.)
Patna Museum, Patna
Arch 9788
Literature: Patna 1965

KURKIHAR, THE SITE of an ancient Buddhist monastery, lies a dozen miles or so from Bodh Gaya, where the Buddha attained enlightenment. The ruins there served villagers as a ready source of bricks; but in 1930, during one of these quarrying operations, a hoard of more than 150 bronzes was discovered. The bronze statues were buried directly in the ground, with the smaller ones packed in earthen pots before interment. Many of the images have inscriptions, dating from the eighth to the twelfth century. The discovery was of great importance, for it shed much light on the art of bronze sculpture in eastern India and revealed some of the finest masterpieces of the medium. Most of the works were acquired by the Patna Museum through the tireless efforts of the eminent lawyer and historian, K. P. Jayaswal.

The four-armed Buddhist divinity stands on a lotus. The palm of his lower right hand is open in the gesture of granting boons *(varadā mudrā)*, while the upper hand holds a rosary. The lower left hand grasps the long stalk of an elaborately carved lotus that rises from the pedestal. The upper hand holds a book. A jar of water, usually held in one of the hands, is placed on a leaf of the lotus plant.

The striped lower garment is decorated with flowers and two girdles, one around the waist, the other a little lower down on the hip. A beaded sacred thread reaches to the thighs; a deerskin is flung over the left shoulder and knotted at the waist. Necklaces adorn the neck and armlets coil about the upper arms. The full face has a rounded chin, full lips, and drooping eyes. A third eye, similar in shape to the others, is placed vertically on the lightly bulging forehead. The hair is piled high in symmetrically arranged locks, a few of which fall over the shoulder. Adorning the central plaque of the headdress is a small Buddha figure, with its hands in the gesture of meditation.

In both modeling and ornament, the sculpture is very similar to the image of Tārā (see cat. no. 60) and must date from the same period. Although of very high quality, it does not exhibit the same spontaneity and masterful execution of the latter and was probably made by a lesser master in the same workshop.



60

Tārā

Mid-ninth century
Kurkihar, Bihar
Bronze, 32 x 22 x 15 cm.
(12⅝ x 8⅝ x 5⅞ in.)
Patna Museum, Patna
Arch 9795
Literature: Patna 1965

THIS IMAGE OF Tārā (feminine counterpart of a Bodhisattva and embodiment of Divine Grace) is one of the finest pieces discovered at Kurkihar. The goddess is seated in a relaxed posture on a lotus; she leans back against a bolster, her pendant leg resting on a smaller flower springing up from the pedestal. The right hand is held near the knee in the gesture of granting gifts *(varadā mudrā)*; the left hand grasps the stem of a blue lotus that blossoms near the shoulder. The soft folds of the lower garment, which is wound tightly around the waist and further secured by a simple, low-slung girdle, end in an agitated, curling hem that enlivens the drapery between the legs. The translucent upper garment follows the subtle modeling of the fleshy body and is looped lightly over the shoulders. The oval face, lovely, somber, and compassionate, has full cheeks, a swelling lower lip, drowsy eyes inlaid with silver, and a rounded forehead, marked at the juncture of the curving eyebrow by a silver dot. The hair is parted in the center, light strands wave along the edges and curled ringlets fall at the sides. A chignon and simple frontlet complete the coiffure. She embodies all of the classical standards of beauty of the time.

The sculpture displays remarkable and consistent plasticity of form. This is best seen in the swelling lotus petals of the seat, the curling tips of the blossoming blue lotus, the supple flesh of the torso, and the smooth breast covered by the delicate garment. A masterful fluidity of line appears in the curve of the looped cloth on the left shoulder, which itself is echoed by the end of the armlet, the flow of hair along the forehead, and the ripples of cloth at the legs. When compared with works of an earlier period (see cat. no. 31), the surfaces appear a little too agitated, the ornament a bit too rich. In the context of the new style, however, few works surpass it in grace and elegance.



61

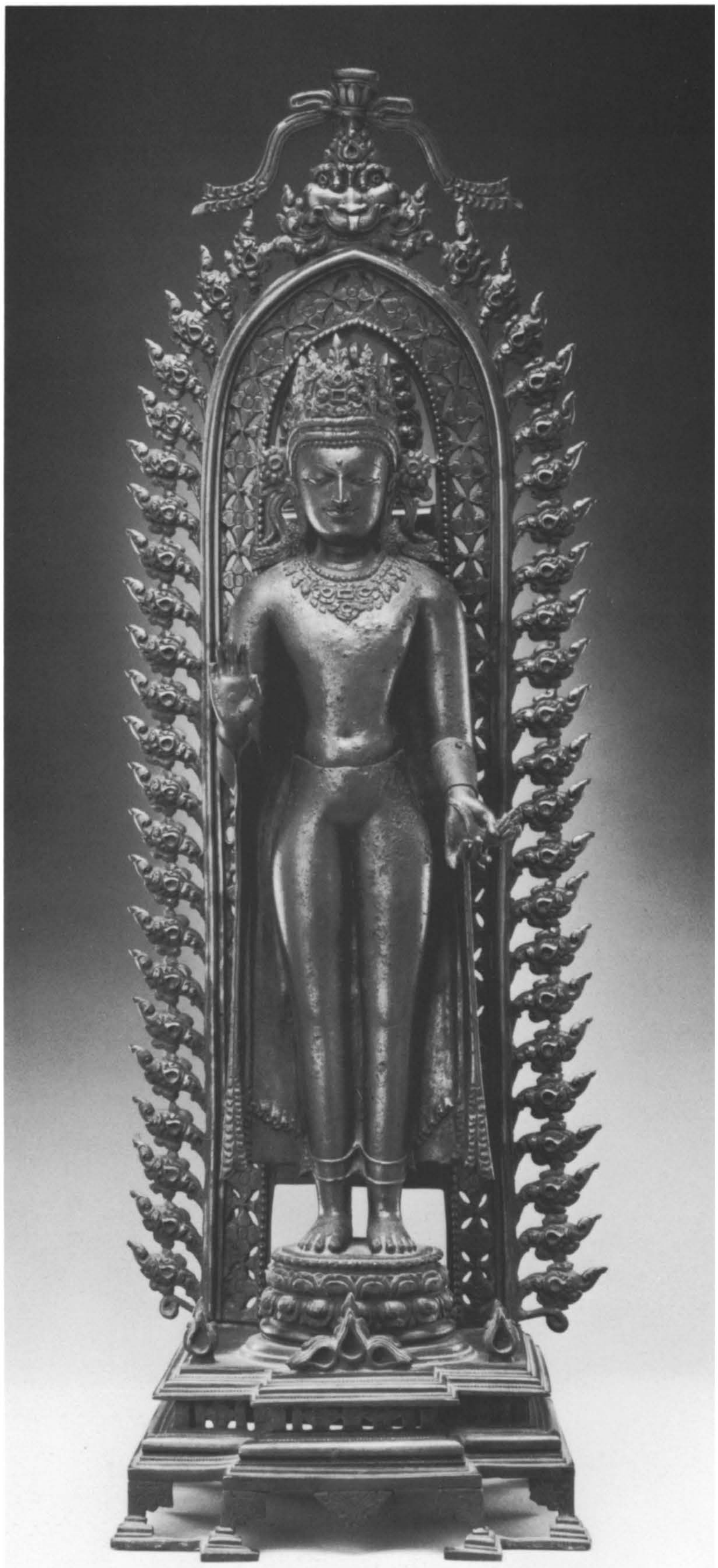
Crowned Buddha

Eleventh century
Kurkihar, Bihar
Bronze, 66 x 22 x 17 cm.
(26 x 8⅝ x 6¹¹⁄₁₆ in.)
Patna Museum, Patna
Arch 9793
Literature: Patna 1965

THE BUDDHA, IN HIS body of glory and as emperor of the Law, stands on a circular lotus pedestal set into a grooved base. His ankle-length lower garment is tied at the waist, the sharp, constricting line dividing the body into two parts, as in the tradition of Sarnath sculpture of the late fifth century A.D. (see cat. no. 28). The monastic robe covers both shoulders and clings so tightly to the shape of the body that the figure almost seems nude. The hem is draped over the hands, one of which is held in the gesture of granting freedom from fear *(abhaya mudrā)*. The cloth projects from the lap as a flat sheet of metal, which joins the vertical ridges falling from the hands at a sharp angle. The edges throughout are tightly pleated; the effect of the whole is to form a rectangular boxlike frame for the lower part of the body. A broad necklace, finely carved in low relief, is worn over the chest and elaborate ornaments adorn the ears. Sharply delineated features distinguish the squarish face, with tiny curls outlining the forehead, marked by a projecting dot *(ūrṇā)* in the center. The tall crown is secured at the back by ribbons, which flutter gracefully to the shoulders.

A tall, arched nimbus, with a row of elaborate, swaying flames at the edge and an inner margin of fretted flowers, forms a glittering frame for the image of the Buddha. At the apex is a lion face *(kīrttimukha)* with flamelike scrolls emerging from its grinning mouth. On the beast's head, a lotus finial is secured by a ribbon that swings to the sides, the flat and minutely pleated ends echoing those of the monastic robe. Since most of the halos in the Kurkihar hoard were found separately from the images, it is not always known which belong together, but there can be little doubt in this particular instance, for the nimbus and figure complement each other perfectly.

This image is a brilliant example of the bronze craftsmanship of eastern India. The modeling is tighter, the forms more tense and solid, and the lines more angular than the work of the ninth century (see cat. no. 59), but it displays a consistency and conscious mastery of the material that characterize the best work of its type.



62

Avalokiteśvara

Twelfth century
Kurkihar, Bihar
Bronze, 25.5 x 16 x 15.5 cm.
(10 x 6⁵⁄₁₆ x 6¹⁄₁₆ in.)
Patna Museum, Patna
Arch 9786
Literature: Patna 1965

THE DIVINITY IS seated on a large lotus, one leg pulled up, the other resting on a smaller flower issuing from the base. The body bends back gracefully, the left hand holding the stem of a lotus plant that rises from the edge of the pedestal. Another lotus plant, with an undulating stem, is located on the opposite side, lending symmetry to the composition. The dress consists of a lower garment that clings closely to the legs; its treatment is flat and hard, most noticeably at the right leg, where it assumes the shape of a grooved metal plate. The looped string folds are sharply ridged, as are those of the flowered upper garment worn across the chest and over the shoulders. One end falls down the back in strong, sweeping curves that echo the contours of the body and the sway of the lotus stems. A broad girdle with pearl festoons clasps the waist firmly; bracelets, armlets with a lion-face ornament *(kīrttimukha)*, a four-strand pearl necklace, and a beaded sacred thread comprise the remainder of the jewelry. The modeling of the face is hard, the features solid. A third eye is placed in the center of the forehead. Thin locks of hair are piled high in loops over the head and fastened by a diadem decorated with a figure of a Buddha in the gesture of meditation. The ribbonlike ties fall at the side and then flutter upward as though moved by a breeze.

The back of the image is fully finished. Projecting from it is a tenon with a lotus base that must have secured a halo. The image is gilt and the eyes inlaid with silver, suggesting that the sculpture must have once been encrusted with precious and semiprecious stones.

The flat modeling, the sharp angularity that fragments the forms, and the hard surfaces overwhelmed by profuse and crisply carved jewelry continue the trends observed in the *Crowned Buddha* from the same hoard (see cat. no. 61) and are in striking contrast to the seated *Tārā* (see cat. no. 60). The execution, however, is precise, assured, and coherent. Linear and restless rather than massive and stable, the medieval style finds perfect expression in this elegant image.





63
A Lion Pouncing on an Elephant
Eighth century
Nalanda, Bihar
Bronze, 67 x 30 cm.
(26⅜ x 11¹³⁄₁₆ in.)
National Museum, New Delhi
72.33

THE ELEPHANT SINKS to its knees under the weight of the lion. The triumphant beast opens its mouth in a roar as it tears its front claws into the protuberances of the elephant's forehead *(kari kumbha vidāraka)*. A stylized mane covers the heavy and powerful neck, and the tail lashes across the back. A ring with two umbrellalike discs joined by a square shaft is attached to the head of the lion. On top is a grooved knob that serves as a finial. A simple lotus pedestal forms the base.

The image of the lion vanquishing the elephant is a familiar one in Indian art and literature and signifies the triumph of celestial light over chthonic darkness. It is found on the walls of temples as well as in the decoration of thrones (see cat. no. 60). This is the only example I know of that constitutes an independent image carved fully in the round. Its function is unclear, but it may have formed part of a life-size throne.



64

Ornamental Panel

Eighth century
Nalanda, Bihar
Probably sandstone, 40 x 181 x 12 cm. (15¾ x 71¼ x 4¾ in.)
Archaeological Museum, Nalanda 10777

In the center of this panel is a lotus plant with a large open flower flanked by two others on top. Conventionally voluted foliage emerging from the nodule at the base obscures the stem. On both sides are half-human, half-bird grotesques with foliate tails. They all carry flowers and twigs with leaves, and the creatures nearest the central plant have their hands raised in praise and adoration.

The work is both more simple and regular in composition than the fifth-century example from Bhumara (see Intro., fig. 18). Though less intricately chiseled, the execution is still pleasing, the forms adhering closely to the ground upon which they are carved.

65
A Pair of Doorjambs
Ninth century
Rewan, Bihar
Probably schist, 158 x 28 x 18 cm. (62¼ x 11 x 7⅛ in.)
Patna Museum, Patna 11083
Literature: Patna 1965

EACH DOORJAMB HAS two moldings. The inner one consists of a floral scroll issuing from the mouth of an upturned *makara* head. The outer molding assumes the form of a pilaster with a dancing male figure at its base; its horizontal divisions are supplied by a leonine mask *(kīrttimukha)* spouting a jeweled pendant, a looped band with festoons, and another lion mask emitting strings of pearls. Two river goddesses occupy the arched niches at the bottom of the jambs. Gaṅgā, accompanied by a male attendant, stands on a *makara* and pours water from a jar. In the opposite niche is Yamunā, who stands with her legs crossed gracefully on a tortoise.

The style of eastern India is particularly well-suited to the rendering of architectural ornament, as affirmed by superb extant fragments such as these. Unfortunately, the widespread destruction of the area left few temples standing, so that this accomplished tradition has not received the recognition it deserves.



66
A Kneeling Elephant
Tenth century
Sahebganj, West Bengal
Bronze, 8 x 16 x 7 cm. (3⅛ x 6¼ x 2¾ in.)
Indian Museum, Calcutta A25195, NS2245

THE VOLUMINOUS MODELING of the elephant's head and trunk effectively convey the bulky flesh of the beast. Heavy garlands made up of bells encircle the protuberances of the forehead and span the animal's enormous girth. The awkward movement of the animal struggling to rise is skillfully captured. Though the sculpture is small, the rendering is monumental, a quality found in Indian sculpture of all periods and regions (see cat. no. 50 for a larger stone image of the same subject).



cat. no. 65

67

Viṣṇu

Early twelfth century
Balurghat, West Bengal
Schist, 132 x 65 x 32 cm.
(52 x 25⅝ x 12⅝ in.)
Indian Museum, Calcutta 2245
Literature: Banerji 1933

A LOTUS PLANT springs from the center of the base, its voluted stems sprouting deeply carved foliage amidst which are figures of worshipping donors and a kneeling Garuḍa, Viṣṇu's vehicle. It also bears three large flowers, the central one supporting Viṣṇu, who carries a mace and a discus. The other flowers support his consorts, Sarasvatī and Lakṣmī, the former playing a lute, the latter holding a fly whisk, their figures swaying. Two smaller male attendants are carved below their elbows. All are elaborately dressed and jeweled, their garments decorated with waving stripes.

At the back of the image is a decorative frame consisting of pilasters capped by a crossbar with *makaras,* whose richly floriated tails swirl upward. They are ridden by mythical creatures, half-bird, half-human *(kinnaras)*. Above is a lion face emitting scrolls, which is flanked by clouds that contain angels bearing garlands.

The hard surface, the crisp, deep carving, the sharp detail, and the restless ornament, its movement accentuated by the waving pattern of the garments, are characteristic of Bengali sculpture of the early twelfth century, of which this image is a particularly striking example.



68

The God of Love, Kāmadeva

Eleventh century
Probably Bhubaneswar, Orissa
Sandstone, 92.7 x 22.9 x 24.2 cm. (36½ x 9 x 9⁹⁄₁₆ in.)
Collection Seattle Art Museum, Seattle. Purchased from Alma Blake Bequest and General Acquisitions Funds 74.17
Literature: Kramrisch 1981

The god bends forward, his torso twisted to the left, his feet firmly planted on a lotus flower. Holding a sugarcane bow in his left hand, Kāmadeva raises his right hand high near his crown, having just let fly the arrow of desire from the bowstring. His two wives, Rati and Prīti, writhe at his feet in amorous passion, representing Kāmadeva's effect on the whole world, which succumbs to his power.

The sinuous line of the long garland, the sweep of the flowering tree, and the sharp, arrowlike ends of the fluttering scarves and streamers enhance the erotic mood of the sculpture. The image was not meant to be seen in isolation, but rather as part of a larger ornamental fabric of great richness and complexity.

69

A Woman Adorning Herself with an Anklet

Early eleventh century
Banpur, Orissa
Bronze, 30 x 7 x 6.5 cm. (11¹³⁄₁₆ x 2¾ x 2⁹⁄₁₆ in.)
Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar AY 271
Literature: Mitra 1978a

During the construction of Banpur High School, Puri district, in 1963, three earthen pots filled with metal sculpture and other antiquities were recovered from what were probably the remains of a Buddhist monastery. Among the images was this small statue of a woman standing on a bell-shaped lotus base. She leans against a stylized tree that now has only one leaf-laden bough. Resting her upraised foot on the trunk, she slips on an anklet. Her dress consists of a striped lower garment reaching to the ankles and a long scarf fluttering up to the shoulder on one side and down to the leg on the other. The torso is softly modeled, the breasts pressed together; the youthful features are clearly carved. A cup-shaped stand with a spike projecting from its center rises from the tree; its precise function is unknown, but I do not think that it held an image (cf. Mitra 1978a, 112).

The lighthearted, lyrical mood of this piece represents a carefree moment in Indian sculpture. Its captivating charm echoes the larger and more ambitious renderings of the gods' damsels executed on temple walls. The style is close to that of work on the Rajrani temple at Bhubaneswar and dates from the same period.



cat. no. 68



cat. no. 69

70

The Guardian of the South (Yama)

Eleventh century
Bhubaneswar, Orissa
Schist, 54 x 29 cm. (21¼ x 11⁷⁄₁₆ in.)
Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar AY 197

THIS IMAGE BELONGS to a group of sculpture (see cat. nos. 71 and 72) accidentally discovered a short distance from the Rajrani temple at Bhubaneswar. A few images of the guardian divinities of the four directions and the image of Gaṇeśa (see cat. no. 71) are stylistically very similar and may have come from the same temple. Why the exquisite doorjamb fragments (see cat. no. 72), which are in an earlier style, should have been found with the other images is unclear.

The potbellied god, who is also the divinity of death, is seated on a water buffalo. He faces to the front, one leg resting on the animal, the other supported by a small lotus. His short lower garment is decorated with rich floral patterns, and the girdle has a row of beaded loops. An equally elaborate upper garment is worn over the left shoulder. The ornaments include necklaces, a sacred thread of three strands, and circular earrings. The bearded, round face displays a fierce expression: the eyes protrude, the nostrils flare, and the mouth opens wide, revealing sharp fangs and teeth. The tall, conical crown is secured by ties that flutter upward. In the right hand is a noose; the left bears a club with a grooved knob, into which the top half of a skull is inserted.

The back of the image consists of a trefoil arch over pilasters flanked by seated attendants. On the spandrels are musicians, one holding a bell with a trident on the handle, the other playing a lute *(vīṇā)*. The angels flying above blow conchs and carry garlands; one of them waves a fly whisk.

The image is carved with extraordinary attention to minute detail, all of which is executed with precision. This is best seen in the rendering of the pattern of the cloth and the curls of the beard. The exquisite craftsmanship of even the tiny attendant figures evokes the miniaturist's art.



71

Gaṇeśa

Eleventh century
Bhubaneswar, Orissa
Schist, 57 x 29 x 15 cm.
(22½ x 11⁷⁄₁₆ x 5⅞ in.)
Orissa State Museum,
Bhubaneswar AY 190

THE STYLE OF this image is identical to that of *The Guardian of the South (Yama)* (see cat. no. 70), the exquisite detail depicted with the same mastery. The corpulent divinity, with a pendulous belly, is shown in the triple-bent posture *(tribhaṅga)*. He holds a rosary, a broken tusk, a bowl of sweets, and a battle-axe in his four hands. The head has wide, flapping ears, whose every vein is sensitively rendered; the hair, arranged in a conical shape, is piled in three tiers, from which crisply carved curls tumble. The trunk, swaying to the left, holds one sweet, and has come to rest on a bowl filled with them. A serpent knotted across the torso serves as the sacred thread.

The base consists of a central double lotus, with similar, but smaller lotuses emerging from its stalk. These support the attendant divinities and Gaṇeśa's weapon, the great axe. A large mouse, the vehicle of Gaṇeśa, crouches on a lotus leaf, its head turned up toward its master.

The back of the throne has a trefoil arch that rests on pilasters carved with prancing lions and attendant figures. In one spandrel is the image of the god of war, Kārttikeya, and in the other is an emaciated dancing figure. The upper lobe of the arch is edged with flames and serves as Gaṇeśa's halo. Angels carrying flowers and fly whisks appear against clouds, while below, others blow vigorously on conchs.



72

Three Fragments of a Doorframe

Tenth century
Bhubaneswar, Orissa
Stone, 40 x 20 x 13 cm. (15¾ x 7⅞ x 5⅛ in.), a; 42 x 21 x 8 cm. (16½ x 8¼ x 3⅛ in.), b; 28 x 18 x 13 cm. (11 x 7¹⁄₁₆ x 5⅛ in.), c.
Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar



72a

The first fragment (72a) consists of a band decorated with a lotus rhizome. The stem winds over the surface, forming two loops with delicately carved blossoms, foliage, and tendrils bursting from nodules. At the bottom, a dwarf Yakṣa with bulging legs steps forward, a satchel swinging from his shoulders as he grasps the stem of a flower. A second Yakṣa, clambering up the rhizome, grasps the main stalk with one hand and lightly holds a flower with the other while he looks back over his shoulder.

The second fragment (72b), which belongs to the same band as the first, also depicts two dwarf Yakṣas climbing a winding lotus stalk. One has a pole with baskets slung across his shoulder, the other delicately touches the stem of a drooping flower.



72b



72c

A *makara* head, facing vertically upward (cf. cat. no. 65), is at the base of the rounded molding of the third piece (72c); sweeping curves of a flowering lotus rhizome form two medallions above. These contain a pair of water buffalo romping amid the foliage, as well as an elephant couple playfully splashing their trunks in the water. The imagery is auspicious and reassuring, consisting of elements associated with the Water Cosmology and fecund pairs.

The work is of high quality and is characterized by easy rhythms and clarity of execution. The first two fragments demonstrate a bold use of line in their clearly defined forms, while the third piece, which is done in much shallower relief, acquires a soft, almost painterly elegance by virtue of the subtle grading of its planes.

73

A Rampant Lion (siṁhavyāla)

Thirteenth century
Konarak, Orissa
Khondalite, approx. 127 x 54 cm. (50 x 21¼ in.)
Archaeological Museum, Konarak 854
Literature: London 1982

The great, rampant beast once trampled an elephant placed on a lotus pedestal. A powerfully curved chest supports the large head. He snarls, whiskers bristling and nostrils flaring above the sharp teeth. The ears are alert and erect, and he has menacing eyes. The small, flamelike tufts of the mane rise like a crown over the forehead and also cover the neck, forelegs, and haunches. Encircling the neck is a beaded collar, and a chain spans the body. A tail once curled between the legs, accentuating the wavelike movement of the body.

This fearsome, chimeric animal is identified with the creative power of God. The lion is also a solar symbol; thus, it appropriately overcomes the elephant, which in this context represents the dark powers of the deep. The image once occupied a recess between the projecting walls of the magnificent temple at Konarak dedicated to the sun god (Sūrya). This was the customary location for such an image.



74

Head of a Crocodilian Creature (makara)

Thirteenth century
Konarak, Orissa
Khondalite, 111 x 105 x 71 cm.
(43¾ x 41⅜ x 28 in.)
Archaeological Museum,
Konarak 168

THE BEAST SUPPORTS itself on two forepaws. Its open mouth reveals sharp teeth and a double tongue; lotus flowers hang from the lower jaw and froth dribbles from its sides. The curved snout is raised, the round eyes bulge, and a scrolled ornament crowns the forehead.

The *makara,* an auspicious symbol of the Water Cosmology, is a perennially popular ornament of Indian architecture. In Orissa, it often formed a part of a pillar, as this example did, projecting above the shaft. It has also been used as a gargoyle, in which case the mouth has an opening, not found here.



75

A Throne Leg

Early thirteenth century
Orissa, exact provenance unknown
Ivory, 36.8 x 13.3 x 15.5 cm. (14½ x 5¼ x 6¼ in.)
Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia. Gift of Mrs. John B. Stetson, Jr.
Literature: Kramrisch 1959; Lohuizen-de Leeuw 1959



THE THRONE LEG is in the form of a mythical creature possessing the body of a lion and the head of an elephant *(gaja-vyāla)*. It is an example of a type that occurs frequently as an architectural ornament on the walls of temples. The creature has one foot on the ground and strides vigorously forward with the other, bringing it crashing down on a cluster of craggy shapes that denote a mountain. These are delicately carved with trees in crevices and animals. A demonic figure with an angry, contorted face, full belly, and wriggling body dangles, face downward, from the elephant trunk, one arm helplessly holding a dagger, the other ineffectively pushing a small shield against the powerful lion claws. The raised tail waves up to the head and locks of twisted hair cascade to the shoulders in four tiers. Tufts of hair edge the haunches, a simple necklace falls on the chest, and beaded festoons adorn the forehead.

This can be compared to *A Rampant Lion* (see cat. no. 73), which is from a slightly later period and represents a mythical beast with a lion head, is made of stone, and is greater in size.

76

A Pair of Throne Legs

Twelfth century
Probably Orissa, exact provenance unknown
Ivory, 17.8 x 17.5 cm. (7 x 6⅞ in.)
The Trustees of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London
I.S. 269 and A-1960
Literature: London 1962

ACCORDING TO INFORMATION supplied by Robert Skelton of the Victoria and Albert Museum, these two legs and a third example in the British Museum form a group. The latter possesses a label recording that it came from the Jangkor Yangtsi monastery, which is situated on the north branch of the Brahmaputra River where it is joined by the Kyi Chu that flows from Lhasa. The two Victoria and Albert lions were apparently brought from Tibet in 1904 by Major A. Wallace Dunlop of the 23rd Sikh Pioneers.

The lions crouch on circular bases, backs curved, chests raised in an alert and tense posture. Their fierce faces are framed by a collar of petals behind which swirl massive locks of hair. The manes are arranged in short tufts that spread over their backs. On the base of each is a short inscription; one reads *srī bhāginī,* the other, *madhyama mahā.* I am unable to understand their significance.



77
The Goddess and the Buffalo

Probably eleventh century
Odalbakra (Kahilipara) in Guwahati, Assam
Bronze, 17.5 x 15.5 cm. (6⅞ x 6⅛ in.)
Assam State Museum, Guwahati
Literature: Choudhury 1962



The head of the goddess, here Durgā, cast in relief on a circular plaque, has a square shape with high cheekbones and a sharply pointed chin. The thin lips and broad nose are pinched out from the plane of the face. Narrowed eyebrows shade the shallow, fish-shaped eyes; circular, beaded earrings adorn the projecting ears. A smooth, circular dome, edged with tiny flames, caps the low crown, which has three triangular plaques above the broad forehead. Six curved locks of hair (or ties of the crown) project from the sides of the head.

The neck of the goddess merges with the head of a wide-horned buffalo. In my opinion, this is a greatly abbreviated rendering of a favorite subject of the Indian sculptor: the Goddess slaying the buffalo demon (fig. 77a). It has been suggested that the head is that of the buffalo demon emerging from the neck of the slain animal and that this plaque

constitutes an offering to the Goddess, rather than an image of the Goddess herself. This seems unlikely, however, because demons, unlike gods, are hardly ever depicted individually as images.

A state on the eastern frontier of India, Assam has always had a large tribal population. Thus, it is not surprising to find indigenous tribal forms being classicized in its art. Here, this intermingling of traditions contributes to an image of elusive beauty, comparable to work produced under similar circumstances elsewhere, notably Himachal Pradesh (see cat. no. 84).

Sculpture of this type is notoriously difficult to date. Because the other images of the hoard in which it was found are roughly datable, on paleographic grounds, to the period from the ninth to eleventh century, this image may also be assigned to a date within the same range.



fig. 77a. *Devī Slaying the Buffalo Demon*
mid-sixth century A.D.
School and period of the Konban Mauryas
From the Shivavi Workshop at Barel,
Bombay, and found at Elephanta

78

A Dancing Mother-Goddess

Eighth century
Pandrenthan in Srinagar, Kashmir
Unidentified stone, approx. 152.4 cm. (60 in.)
Sri Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar

ANCIENT SRINAGAR, the capital of Kashmir, was located at the site of what is now called Pandrenthan (literally, "the ancient capital") and is a suburb of the modern city of Srinagar, a short distance away. Presently a military cantonment, Pandrenthan is rich in ancient ruins. This large image, possibly Cāmuṇḍa, was discovered there, along with other images representing the various mother-goddesses, in the course of digging the foundations of a modern building.

The Goddess is depicted in a dancing position, with one knee bent and a raised left hand holding an indistinguishable object. She wears a close-fitting tunic, the hem of which is slashed and pointed and decorated with a beaded border. Three necklaces, one of them resting on the partially revealed breasts, adorn her. The massive head has full lips, large cheeks, protruding eyes, and eyebrows wrinkled in a scowl. The strands of tossed hair are parted in the center of the head, below a damaged crown decorated with leaves and a skull. A heavy garland, which must have nearly reached to the ankles, falls over the left shoulder; it, too, is embellished with skulls, and reinforces the rhythmic contours of the body.

The image is strongly modeled, the forms barely able to contain the pent-up energy surging from within. The wide thighs, smooth belly, and folds of flesh below the full breasts have a robust power, which complements the controled fury of the face. Though different in style, this vision of the Goddess is no less awesome than that which finds expression in *The Goddess as Death (Cāmuṇḍā)* (see cat. no. 47).

79

Crowned Buddha

Eighth century
From Kashmir, exact provenance unknown
Brass with copper and silver inlay, 31.1 x 22.9 x 6.4 cm. (12¼ x 9 x 2½ in.)
The Asia Society, New York. Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd Collection 1979.44
Literature: Pal 1975

THE BUDDHA IN his aspect as the King of the Law (Dharmarāja) wears a monastic robe, but also has a short, pointed cape covering his chest and shoulders and a pearled crown, the ties of which flutter to his shoulders. Other items of jewelry are earrings, necklaces, and a large garland that loops over the lotus on which he is seated. The lotus itself has one row of upturned petals and another of drooping ones. It is supported by a thick stem, which is flanked by serpent kings that rise from the water, represented by lightly incised swirls on the upper surface of the pedestal. Two thick stems branch out from a central nodule, their flowers supporting elaborate stupas with tall spires, each consisting of thirteen parasols topped by an umbrella. An eye is incised on the dome of the stupa to the right. In addition to the



cat. no. 79

main stems, there are several tendrils yielding leaves and flowers that encircle two geese.

Pilasters divide the front of the pedestal into five niches. The central one contains a wheel symbolizing the Buddhist Law. This is flanked by guardian figures in menacing attitudes and followed by deer with turned heads. The cyclopean texture suggests a mountainous locale. At the sides of the base are small figures of the donor and his wife, both

wearing Scythian dress, each accompanied by a kneeling figure.

The pedestal bears a two-line inscription, which has been deciphered by Shri Krishna Deva of Varanasi as follows:

> Line 1. *saṁvatsare 8 vaiśākha śudi 2. deyadharmoyaṁ paramopāsaka mahāgajapati śaṅkara se*
> Line 2. *ṇasya. deyadharmoyaṁ mahāśrāddhāyā paramopāsikyā rājaduhitṛ devaśryāyāḥ*
>
> TRANSLATION: *This is the pious gift of the devout Śaṅkarasena, the great lord of the elephant corps, and of the pure-minded, devout princess Devaśryā, made in the second day of Vaiśākha, in the year 8*

The bronze is remarkable for its richness of detail and exquisite finish. Both the stem and the central flower of the lotus are smoothly modeled, endowing the swelling forms with life.

80

Halo of an Image of Viṣṇu

Ninth century
Devsar, Kashmir
Bronze, 191 x 132 x 10 cm. (75¼ x 52 x 3 15/16 in.)
Sri Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar
Literature: Goetz 1953; Pal 1975; Bhan 1983

DEVSAR, ANCIENT DEVASARAS, lies near Kulgam, Anantnag district, and is an important site often mentioned in the historical chronicles of Kashmir. Excavations carried out there in 1930 exposed the ruins of a temple dedicated to Viṣṇu with an outer paved ambulatory two feet wide. Observing a small portion of a sculpture projecting above the pavement level, the excavator, M. S. Kaul, successfully removed this halo. The main image has not yet been located.

The halo is elliptical in shape and cast in one piece. A trefoil arch recessed in the center must have once framed the image of the main deity. A lotus blossom is placed just above the opening for the head. At the spandrels, which intersected with the shoulders of the missing deity, are two figures carrying a fly whisk and a garland; they can be identified as the celestial attendants of Viṣṇu, Jaya: on the right, and Vijaya, on the left. A minor, arched band running from the "shoulders" of the large trefoil contains twenty-one full-blown lotus flowers. It is followed by the principal decoration of the halo: a broad, fretted band consisting of ovoid openings that are formed by the intertwining stalks of a lotus flower and a blue lotus. The outermost band of the halo is filled with flickering flames, which are interrupted at the apex by a triangular projection; this, in turn, is comprised of a trefoil niche capped by a grooved disc, which is adorned by two banners. An oval medallion with a jewel and a short projecting staff form the finial above.

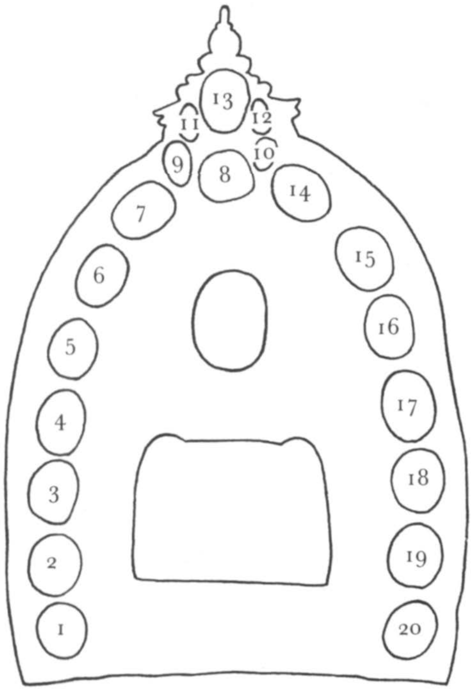


fig. 80a



4

Dr. J. L. Bhan of the University of Kashmir has provided the following summary description of the halo's iconographic features:

The images of the halo are identified on the basis of the *Nīlamata-purāṇa,* the *Jayākhyā-saṁhitā,* and the *Viṣnudharmottara-purāṇa,* ancient canonical texts, and are described according to the numbers in the accompanying illustration (see fig. 80a).

1, 20. *Serpent divinities (Nāga).* They have a human body and seven-headed serpent canopies around the head. Only the portion above the thighs is shown, as though it was emerging from the water. This is entirely appropriate, for the waters are their natural habitat. It is possible that the two Nāgas are Nīla and Vāsuki, the worship of whom is popular in Kashmir.

2. *Viṣṇu lying on the serpent Śeṣa.* The god supports his head with one hand; the other three hands are empty. The unusual, turbanlike headdress has a circular projection in the center (cf. image no. 18). The feet are crossed at the ankles. A lotus, rising from the navel, supports Brahmā, the Creator, who resembles images of the Buddha in *abhaya mudrā,* except that he has four arms. Two menacing demons, Madhu and Kaiṭabha, have seized the lotus stalk, threatening to interrupt the process of creation.

3. *Viṣṇu with a horse's head (Hayagrīva).* He is eight-armed, the upper two holding the orbs of the sun and moon. The next pair of hands holds a stylus and a book, followed by hands holding a lotus and a conch. The pendant right hand is in the gesture of granting freedom from fear, the left holding what seems to be a water jar

4. *Viṣṇu slays the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha.* The god has seized the demons by the neck, dragging them onto his thighs. This is an action seldom seen in images of this type, but is in keeping with the *Jayākhyā-saṁhitā.* The account there states that the demons were immortal in water, and had to be pulled out of it and placed on Viṣṇu's thighs before they could be slain.

5. *Viṣṇu with four faces worshipped by Brahmā, the Creator.* Only three of the heads can be seen; the one on the right is of a lion, the one on the left, a boar. The small, attendant figure seated to the right is Brahmā, with two hands holding a rosary and a staff, the other two in a gesture of adoration.



7



8

6. *Viṣṇu with four faces attended by his consort, the goddess Lakṣmī.* The image holds a lotus and conch in the upper hands; the lower right hand is extended in the gesture of granting freedom from fear. The goddess, wearing elaborate jewelry, is seated to his left.

7. *The boar incarnation of Viṣṇu (Varāha) rescuing the earth.* The god, feet planted firmly on the serpent Śeṣa, rises upward, balancing the earth goddess (Bhudevī) on a raised arm. He holds a sword and a conch. One hand rests on his thigh, while the other holds the looped tail of Śeṣa, the upper part of whose body is entirely human, lacking the usual serpent hoods. Two hands are folded in the gesture of adoration, two others holding a plough and a pestle; these are attributes of the god Balarāma, who is identified with Śeṣa (cf. image no. 14).

8. *The god Viṣṇu absorbed in yoga.* The four-armed god, in the center of the arched band, is seated on a double lotus, legs crossed. The palms of the two lower hands are held in the lap in the gesture of meditation *(dhyāna mudrā)*. The two upper hands, raised to shoulder level, are empty, and do not hold either the conch or the discus; this is in keeping with some iconographic texts which state that these attributes would be inappropriate to Viṣṇu in this particular aspect. The figure also lacks a crown; the hair, piled on the head in three loops, falls over the shoulders in the manner of ascetics. The chest carries the holy *śrīvatsa* mark, and the sacred thread is worn over the left shoulder. A kneeling figure of Garuḍa is to the right of Viṣṇu.

It is obvious that the figure is neither Buddha or Śiva. The main image of the halo may well have been of this very aspect of Viṣṇu.

9, 10. *The sun and the moon gods.* These attendant figures are located outside the medallions housing Viṣṇu as yogi (image no. 8), each with a hand raised in a laudatory gesture. They are both dressed in jacketlike armor and tall boots. The upper garment of the sun god (image no. 9) flares out behind his body, while the moon god (image no. 10) holds a staff topped by the crescent moon.





18

11, 12. *The sages Bhṛgu and Mārkaṇḍeya.* The kneeling ascetics are dressed in robes reaching to the thighs and pulled over the left shoulder. Their unadorned locks of hair are appropriate to ascetics. Their hands are folded in gestures of adoration.

13. *The seven/nine-headed image of Viṣṇu.* The image is located at the projecting crest of the halo in a trefoil niche supported on pillars. The god stands on a large lotus, with a tiny figure of the earth goddess located between his feet. Of the eight arms, the two upper ones hold the orbs of the sun and moon, followed by hands holding a stylus and a book, and a sword and club, respectively. Two lower hands rest on attendant figures standing on the lotus pedestal. To the right is the personified goddess of his mace (Kaumodakī); to the left is Cakrapuruṣa, the personified god of his discus. Seven heads are visible, and if we were to presume that the back heads are not (which is often the case), we would have an image of nine heads. The first row consists of boar (Varāha), human (Vāsudeva), and lion (Narasiṁha) heads as in image nos. 4 and 5. Above are three human heads with crowns; the topmost single head is that of a horse (Hayagrīva). I am unable to identify this image exactly, but it must be a representation of one of the cosmic forms of Viṣṇu. The nature of the attributes, combining those of Viṣṇu, Śiva, and Brahmā, suggests that this may be a composite image of these gods.

14. *The boar incarnation of Viṣṇu (Varāha) slaying the demon Hiraṇyākṣa.* The god, blowing on his conch, strides forth against the demon, discus raised and brandishing a sword. The demon, with beard and mustach, resists, wielding a mace with both hands (cf. image no. 7).

15. *The man-lion incarnation of Viṣṇu (Narasiṁha) slaying the demon Hiraṇyakaśipu.* The god, with the head of a lion, has seized the demon by the hair, crushing him to the ground with the raised left foot bearing down on his shoulder. He has four arms, but none hold any weapons or attributes; rather, they assume various gestures. The demon tries in vain to unsheath his dagger.

16. The image is missing.

17. The image is a later restoration and is not identifiable.

18. *The dwarf incarnation of Viṣṇu (Vāmana).* The headdress is similar to that of image no. 2. The stocky god

has two arms, one of which holds a staff, from which a sack is suspended. To his right is the demon-king Bali, conferring the gift of three steps of land by pouring water from a pot, which he holds with both hands. To the left is his consort, her hands folded in adoration. The next incident of the myth is depicted in image no. 19.

19. *The god Viṣṇu measuring out the three steps of land (trivikrama) given to him by the demon-god Bali.* (See image no. 18 for the first event in this narrative.) Immediately after receiving the gift, the dwarf (image no. 18) expanded to colossal size, filling the universe. He is shown here taking one of his world-straddling steps, the hapless Bali clinging to his raised leg. The god holds a mace and a shield in his upper two hands. The third tolds a conch, while the fourth seems to be empty. The horse at the god's foot refers to the horse sacrifice celebrated by Bali.

20. *A Nāga* (see image no. 1).

J. L. BHAN



19

The images of the halo bear close stylistic similarities to sculpture from Avantipura, which is generally dated to the reign of King Avantivarman (A.D. 855-83). This may be seen in the massive, sometimes ponderous modeling of the body, the swelling chest, and the soft belly divided into two or four fleshy segments by the crease of the navel. The broad face, the crown with the crescent-shaped plaques, and the jewelry are also quite similar, as are the postures, particularly the extreme bow-shaped bearing of Viṣṇu's attendants (image no. 13). However, differences can also be noticed, for instead of the somewhat refined and sedate handling of forms,

we find here sculpture that is free and buoyant, often bursting with passionate energy. Particularly striking is the Varāha (image no. 14), in which the impetuous motion initiated by the stretched right leg carries the figure to the very edge of the medallion. The force of the impact flings the struggling demon beyond the border. In another depiction of the Varāha (image no. 7), the same energetic movement is pulled upward, as the god rises from the deep, supported by the serpent with the lashing tail, whose body extends beyond the confines of the medallion frame. The anger of Narasiṁha (image no. 15) as he crushes the helpless demon finds powerful expression in the violent movement of his body and

the almost palpable roar of the open mouth. Both Viṣṇu slaying Madhu and Kaiṭabha (image no. 4) and Viṣṇu encompassing the universe in his great stride (image no. 19) possess the same sweeping motion, one that refuses to be contained, overflowing the oval boundaries. At the same time, this restless movement is subtly tuned to harmonize with the curving forms of the medallions, reinforcing the rhythmic interplay of the image and its borders.

The medallions themselves are sculpted with great subtlety, the rigidity of the lotus stalks that form their borders softened by the echoing forms of shoots, tendrils, leaves, and flowers. This remarkable sensitivity is also seen in the lotus medallions of the inner band, where the tightly curved shape of each petal is rendered with exquisite feeling.



81
Buddha Attacked by the Evil Forces of Māra
Eighth century
Kashmir, exact provenance unknown
Ivory, 14.3 x 8.9 cm. (5⅝ x 3½ in.)
The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland. Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund 71.18
Literature: Dwivedi 1976

THE BUDDHA, SEATED with legs crossed, is dressed in a monastic robe that covers the left shoulder; the folds of the cloth are closely pleated. One end of the robe is held in the palm of the left hand, which rests on the lap. Next to him, on either side, are what appear to be seated female figures, each holding a flower in one hand. Their right hands are raised above their crowned heads in a laudatory gesture. On both sides of the Buddha are flying figures, the host of Māra, the Evil One, blowing on conchs and brandishing weapons as they attempt to disturb the Buddha's meditations. The Buddha himself touches the Earth with his right hand, calling upon her to bear witness to his enlightenment. The ugly creatures flee as she does this with a roar and the gods, carrying scented garlands, celebrate the occasion. Here they are represented by a single figure holding a garland above the Buddha's head.

The carving of the ivory is meticulous and intricate, appropriate to the precious nature of the material. India possessed a very rich tradition in this medium, which is repeatedly referred to in literature. However, very little has survived due to its vulnerability to time and climate. This sculpture may well have traveled back to India with the recent refugees from monasteries in Tibet.



82 **

Viṣṇu

Ninth century
Kashmir, exact provenance unknown
Stone, approx. 121.9 cm. (48 in.)
Sri Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar

THIS PARTICULAR FORM of Viṣṇu, with a boar and lion head to the right and left of the central face, is particularly popular in Kashmir (cf. cat. no. 80).

The image is remarkable, for the torso is of ample proportions, its great strength emphasized by the jeweled garlands that sweep over the arm and the shoulder and fall over the chest. The conch and the lotus, held in the left and right hand, are unusually massive, the features in keeping with the weighty modeling of the body. The full face, calm and introspective, is capped by an elaborate crown with pearl festoons attached to circular plaques, all carved with delicacy and clarity. This fine craftsmanship is also to be seen in the roaring boar and lion faces with brisk manes and lively expression. The harmonious interplay between swelling volumes and exquisite ornament makes this image a splendid example of the Kashmir style.

83 **

a) **Yakṣī Holding Flowers**

b) **Mother and Child**

Probably seventh or eighth century
Gazan, Himachal Pradesh
Himalayan cedar, 151.5 cm. (59⅝ in.), a; 194 cm. (76⅜ in.), b
Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi
Literature: Diserens 1981

THE EXISTENCE OF an ancient tradition of architecture and sculpture in wood, at least as rich as that in stone, is borne out by both archaeological and literary evidence, as well as by details of technical execution that are peculiar to wood and preserved in other materials. But India's climate has taken its toll upon this vulnerable material, so that what survives of ancient wooden sculpture is relatively recent in date and largely confined to south India.

These two wooden sculptures were recently discovered, along with four others, in a temple of relatively new construction at Gazan, in the secluded Himayalan valley of Kulu. In spite of their poor condition, they are superb examples, whose original sculptural qualities are paradoxically enhanced by the abrasion of detail.

A woman standing on a platform supported by a dwarf adorns one of these two wooden posts (83a). Her legs are crossed in a pose whose stately ease is emphasized by the softly curving hem of the lower garment. The elaborate coiffure consists of a series of small buns encircling the head. Posed beneath the branches of a blossoming *aśoka* tree, the woman holds flowers arranged in the shape of a shield, and it is possible that she is participating in floral sport which, with water combat, is often seen in Indian art. The other image (83b) displays a young mother standing in a captivatingly sinuous pose, a child balanced on her hip. The pointed, drooping hem of the tunic and the clinging skirt, with its closely crinkled cloth, accentuate the elongated pattern of the body. A scarf is draped loosely over the head, above which is a clump of foliage with flowers.

The rarity of ancient sculpture in wood makes it difficult to assess the age of these early works. Attenuated proportions of the human body are characteristic of the sculpture of this region in Himachal Pradesh dating from the ninth century; this is to be observed in the style of work from the nearby Basesvara Mahadeva temple at Bajaura (early ninth century) and the splendid bronze images from the not so distant Brahmor (c. A.D. 700). These wooden images, however, could be a little earlier, for they possess smooth, rippling contours and a plastic volume that derived from sixth- and seventh-century traditions. It is also interesting to observe that they are hardly affected by the weightiness of the great style of Kashmir, which dominated much of the northern Himalayas (see cat. no. 78); rather, the inspiration for these pieces seems to come from the contemporary art of



cat. no. 84

the plains, and follows the achievements of the fifth century as seen in cat. nos. 26 and 31.

84
Pārvatī
Probably eighth century
Himachal Pradesh, exact provenance unknown
Bronze, 34.2 x 26 x 9 cm. (13½ x 10½ x 3$^{9}/_{16}$ in.)
Museum für Indische Kunst, West Berlin
Literature: Berlin 1976

THIS SCULPTURE IS a bust-length representation of the goddess Pārvatī in one of her numerous manifestations. The gently swelling breasts are small and set apart on the chest. A snake passes underneath them, over the shoulders, and nestles its head beneath the right breast. The necklace pendant is a ring with three points and the short neck has the usual triple folds. Pārvatī's eyes are large and wide-open; nevertheless, her gaze is turned inward so that the face is submerged in a brooding expression. Circular, beaded earrings hang from the distended lobes of the stylized ears, whose helix and antihelix are delineated by geometrical curves. The hair is parted in the center and arranged in thin

locks placed diagonally across the head. A knoblike ornament rests on top of the head, a crescent moon at the side. Tied across the forehead is a tiara, with a beaded edge and flowers at the extremities.

This image, like the plaque from Assam (see cat. no. 77), derived from an indigenous folk form that was classicized under the influence of the high art of the Gangetic plains. This combination of styles lends a certain naiveté and simple strength to the sculpture. Masks of this type were dedicated to temples by donors and were taken out in procession during festivals, particularly in the spring. Not many ancient examples have survived; the best-known being an inscribed work representing Mujunī Devī in the temple of Nirmand in Kulu district (Shuttleworth 1927, pl. 3). It is dated, on paleographic grounds, to the ninth century. As this example exhibits more plasticity of form, it is most likely from an earlier date.

85

Angels in Flight

Probably seventh century
Aihole, Karnataka
Sandstone, 130 x 110 cm.
(51⅛ x 43¼ in.)
National Museum, New Delhi
L55.22

THE FLIGHT OF these celestial creatures is suggested by their pose: legs lifted off the ground, knees bent, back legs thrown upward, and torsos and heads swaying backward, as the deeply curved bodies billow like sails. The man, who takes the lead, holds a fly whisk in his upraised hand; the woman, floating behind him, rests a weightless arm on his shoulder. The sense of flight is reinforced by her scarf, which flutters in the clouds.

The man is dressed in a diaphanous lower garment, secured at the waist by a looped girdle. The scarf, also tied at the waist, swings across the thighs, echoing the curve of the girdle. An ornamental band with waving ends encircles his stomach and the calm head is adorned with a tall crown. He looks back to the woman, who wears large earrings, and has a bun at the top of her head.

Except in the early periods, the Indian sculptor did not use wings to depict flying figures. Instead, he relied upon movement and the posture of the body, his success particularly marked from the fifth century onward. This sculpture is a felicitous example, the figures floating swiftly and surely through space. It was found with a companion piece, resting against the base of the Durga temple at Aihole. Although the work might belong to that temple, there is no firm evidence of this.



86

Bracket with the Figure of a Woman

Late eleventh century
Telsang, Karnataka
Probably metasiltstone,
144 x 41 x 20 cm.
(56¾ x 16⅛ 7⅞ in.)
Karnataka Government
Museum and Venkatappa Art
Gallery, Bangalore

TELSANG IS A village in the Belgaum district of Karnataka, barely twelve miles west of Bijapur. That several inscriptions of the Cāḷukya dynasty (c. A.D. 973-1163), whose capital was at Kalyani, were found at Telsang attests to the antiquity of the site. The superb bracket figure seen here is one of two removed from this location (cf. London 1982, fig. 70).

The woman stands on a tall pedestal that sends out undulating creepers from its sides. The two vines form a series of looped medallions, many of which contain human and animal figures. Those above the shoulder are particularly distinctive, for they seem to represent scenes from the life of Rāma. Several depict combat between men and monkeys. Another presents a multiheaded and multiarmed figure, possibly Rāvaṇa, while the figure of a kneeling archer almost certainly represents Rāma.

The rhizome and medallions create an oval frame for the woman, who stands in the triple-bent posture, her right hip thrust out exaggeratedly. The rich jewelry includes anklets, two rings around the calves, a triple girdle with multiple festoons, several necklaces, large, circular earrings, and pearled loops over the hair. The oval face has sensitive, clear-cut features, which assume a dignified and somewhat aloof expression.

Several parts of the frame are only roughly chiseled, suggesting that the image is unfinished. The holes at the breasts and stomach appear to be sockets, perhaps to hold pins or supports for the broken, undercut necklace. The ground behind the figure has been cut away entirely; this is also true to a lesser extent for the jewelry and some of the medallions. In spite of the extremely rich decoration, the execution is very precise, so that there is no confusion of forms. This gives the sculpture a clarity and compositional coherence that are often lost in excrescent detail.



87

Kṛṣṇa Lifting Govardhana Hill

Mid-twelfth century
Halebidu, Karnataka
Schist, 152 x 62 cm.
(59⅞ x 24⅜ in.)
Archaeological Site Museum, Halebidu 401

INDRA, KING OF THE GODS, brought down torrents of rain on the village in which Kṛṣṇa lived to punish the inhabitants for abandoning his worship. Kṛṣṇa protected them by effortlessly lifting Govardhana hill, here represented by piled up boulders, and using it as a gigantic umbrella. The hill is inhabited by playful monkeys, bears, birds, a spotted leopard, a meditating ascetic, and two snakes with rearing heads, whose bodies droop down from the hillside.

On the right side of Kṛṣṇa, from top to bottom, are: a pair of village maidens, one carrying a garland, the other a tray of flowers; two women, one dancing with her hands raised above her head, the other making the gesture of worship; a cow with her head tilted to the side; and women carrying whisks and floral offerings. On the left side are similar figures: a lady holding a garland, accompanied by another with her hands folded in adoration; a youth blowing a horn and with a female dancer; a group of four animated cows; and worshippers with fly whisks and flowers. At the base of the image is a panel containing a lion face emitting floral rhizomes.

The Karnataka style of this period is probably the most ornate in Indian art, but an unhurried look reveals that behind the ornamentation truthful observations, telling detail, and meticulous execution contribute to a style far more accomplished than is commonly realized. The inscribed label on this work reads *[r?]uma bekaṇa,* which suggests that the sculptor was named Bekaṇa.



88 **

Dancing Śiva

Late seventh century
Alampur, Andhra Pradesh
Probably sandstone, 94 x 31.1 cm. (37 x 12¼ in.)
Archaeological Museum, Alampur
Literature: Khan 1973

Bending both knees in dance, Śiva plants one foot firmly on the back of a prostrate demon; the other foot, heel raised, is about to be lifted. The bent fingers of the right hand are held rather loosely in an expressive gesture, while the left arm extends across the body to point at his feet, which are the refuge of the three worlds (the nether world, this world, and the heavens). The other right hands hold a rattle drum, a bowl, and an axe; the left hands carry fire, a snake, and a trident. A sacred thread, a stomach band, a necklace, and a pair of circular earrings comprise most of the jewelry. Rising above the third eye on the brow of the full face is a tall coiffure of piled locks. These are adorned by a crescent moon and clasped by a fillet of three richly ornamented plaques. A small halo is carved at the back of the head. Two dwarf attendants *(gaṇas)*, playing a flute and keeping time with drums, are absorbed in their music.

A favorite subject of south Indian sculptors, the dance of Śiva is a well-known icon in the Western world, particularly after Rodin's evocative rhapsody (Rodin 1921). There are many levels of symbolic and metaphysical meaning to this dance of bliss, wisdom, and death. Briefly, it is the dance of creation by which Śiva dances the world into being; at the same time, it is the dance of death by which he dances it into nothingness. These two activities are symbolized by the vibrating sound of the drum and the flaming heat of the fire. At the same time, the dance reassures the devotee, for an understanding of its significance carries with it the certainty of emancipation from the trammels of existence under the protection of Śiva.

Bronze sculpture of the dancing Śiva is justly famous, but this representation in stone is difficult to surpass. The surface of the sculpture heaves like the sea, as the whirling movement of arms and legs is reinforced by the rapid sweep of cloth waving against the thigh and the swift coils of the dangling serpent. The face is serene, however, showing Śiva effortlessly transcending the ceaseless activity of which he is both master and source.



89

Viṣṇu with Consorts

Tenth century
Probably Warangal district, Andhra Pradesh
Bronze, 37 x 20 x 15 cm. (14⅝ x 7⅞ x 5⅞ in.)
Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum of Indian Art, Hyderabad 76.850

To HIS DEVOTEES, Viṣṇu is the Supreme God, and he is depicted in art in a variety of forms *(avatārās)* that make us aware of his universal nature (see cat. no. 80). Here he stands on a lotus placed on a rectangular pedestal, from the base of which projects another flower carrying the image of Garuḍa, the vehicle of the god, seated in a worshipful posture. Viṣṇu is four-armed, the upper hands holding a discus and a conch from which small flames emanate. The lower right hand, in the gesture of granting freedom from fear, also holds a lotus, an unusual iconographic feature. The lower left hand steadies a large mace, which is propped on the pedestal below. The crown is tall and cylindrical and the ornaments are rich yet simple. The consorts of Viṣṇu, the goddesses Srī and Bhū, stand on either side in graceful, swaying postures.

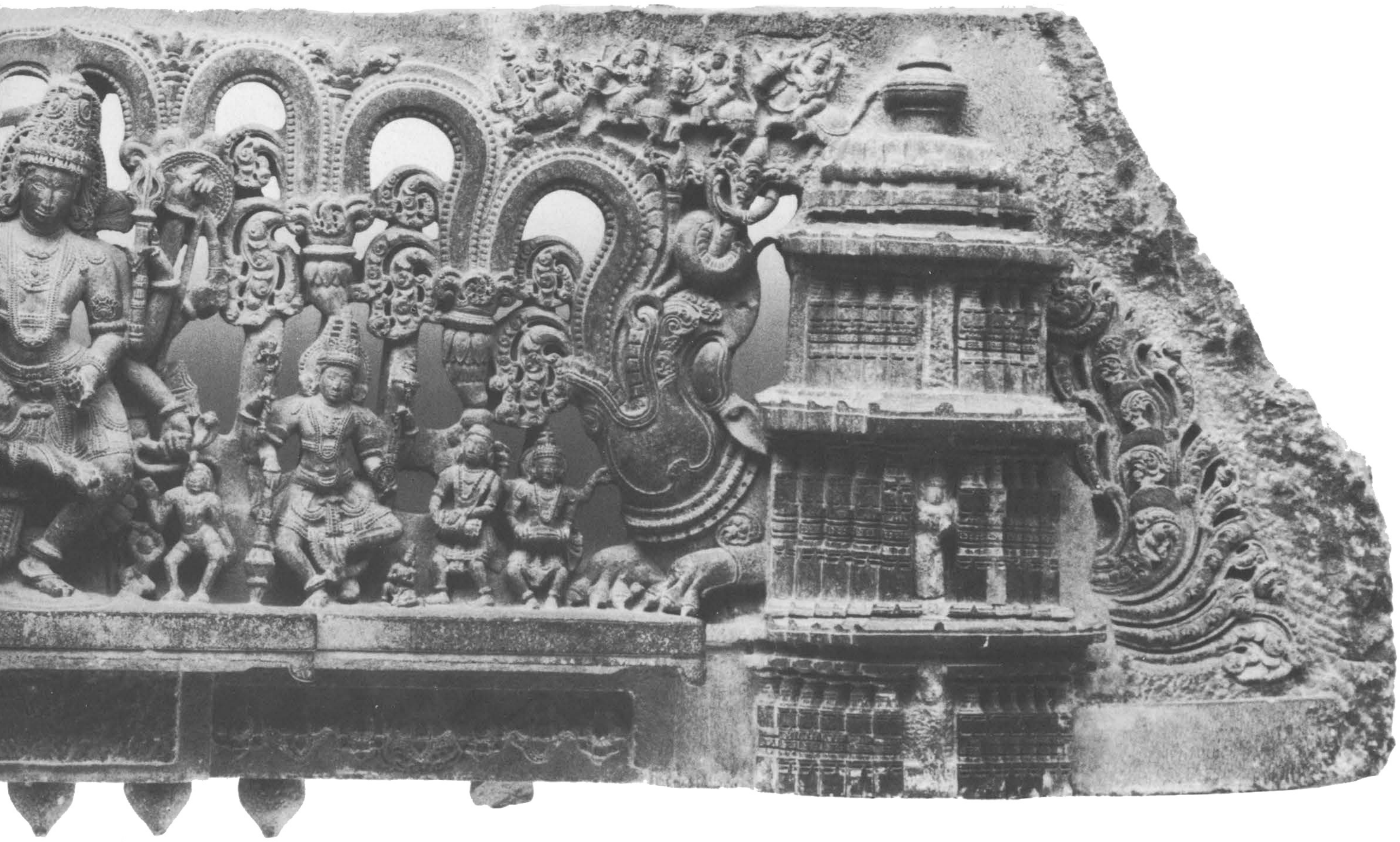
An important feature of the bronze is the elegant frame, which consists of two small pillars on which rest *makaras,* from whose mouths elaborate, winding rhizomes emerge that meet one another in a floriated scroll at the top. The stems flow smoothly and are modeled with grace and skill.

The image is a rare example of Andhra bronze sculpture of the tenth century. It was collected near Kulpak (ancient Kollipāka), a village in Warangal district. The site, with its extensive remains, is an ancient one and has also yielded a hoard of bronze bells (Ramesan 1961). These two discoveries make a provenance of Kulpak for this Viṣṇu image all the more likely.

JAGDISH MITTAL







90

Lintel of a Doorframe

Twelfth century
Warangal, Andhra Pradesh
Unidentified stone, 353 x 95 cm.
(139 x 37⅜ in.)
National Museum, New Delhi
4154

BETWEEN TWO ELABORATE, small pillars simulating temples are a pair of *makaras* from whose mouths spout a seven-lobed arch filled with intricate floral scrolls. In the center is a large, eight-armed figure of a dancing Śiva, who holds a rosary, an hourglass drum, a mace with a skull, an arrow, a raised sword, a shield, a trident, a writhing serpent, and a citron fruit known as the *bījapūraka*. He raises his right foot to his knee in a dance gesture. Below him is his vehicle, a bull. The gods Brahmā and Viṣṇu to the right and left, respectively, have been infected by the spirit and are shown dancing in similar postures. Four men, two in each corner, play on drums. In the top corners are the eight guardians of the quarters, four on each side, riding their vehicles. The modeling is hard; the surfaces are embellished with rich but severely ordered ornament, which is representative of the style of this period.

91

Viṣṇu with Consorts

Mid-tenth century
Tamilnadu, exact provenance unknown
Probably granulite, 176.5 x 61.6 cm. (69½ x 24¼ in.), Viṣṇu; 129.5 x 38.1 cm. (51 x 15 in.), Bhūdevī; 138.4 x 41.9 cm. (54½ x 16½ in.), Śrīdevī
The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland. John L. Severance Fund 63.106, 63.104, 63.105

VIṢṆU STANDS ERECT on a double-lotus pedestal, one hand resting on the hip, the other held in the gesture of granting freedom from fear. He holds two of his attributes, a flaming discus and a conch, in his raised hands. The lower garment reaches below the knees, and is secured by a girdle with an elaborate lion-faced *(kīrttimukha)* buckle and decorative bands of cloth looped over the thigh. The torso is richly adorned with profuse but delicately carved jewelry, and the crown is very slender and tall.

The two goddesses who accompany him are similarly dressed. Bhūdevī, deity of the earth, wears a jeweled breast-band and a conical, tiered crown, whose broad pearl fillet is decorated with a flower. Neither this ornamentation nor the breast band appears on Śrīdevī, who wears a necklace with a single pendant strand that falls between her breasts, rather than the crossed necklace of her companion.

The tall, columnar form of Viṣṇu is set off by the shorter, more modeled ones of his two consorts. The surfaces of his body are tense rather than relaxed, the skin pulled taut. The ornament is extremely rich, but its sketchy patterns and delicate execution, which may be the effect of the very hard stone, prevent the bodies from being overwhelmed. The contours are clearly defined and executed with great linear precision. The calm, aloof faces and the quiet, dignified poses all contribute to works of great sobriety and elegance.



Bhūdevī



Viṣṇu



Śrīdevī

92

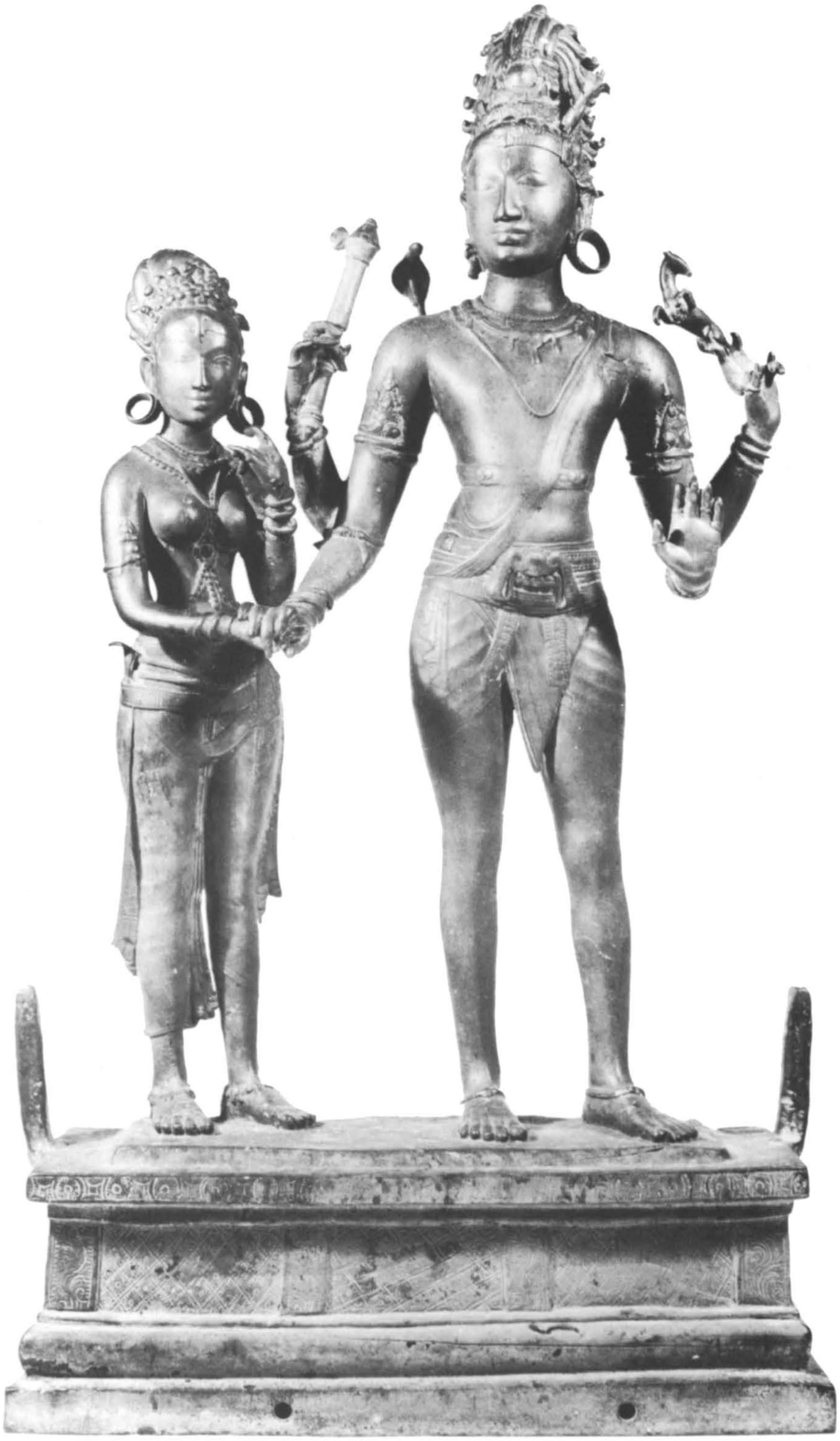
The Marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī (Śiva Kalyāṇasundara-mūrti)

Late ninth century
Vadakkalattur, Tamilnadu
Bronze, 90.5 cm. (35⅝ in.), Śiva; 73.7 cm. (29⅜ in.), Pārvatī
Collection of the Chidambaresvarar Temple, Vadakkalattur
Literature: Nagaswamy 1983

WITH HIS HEAD turned toward the devotee, Śiva steps gently forward, leading the shy Pārvatī by the hand. A short piece of cloth with light, regular folds covers his thighs; one end falls in a triangular projection between the legs, the other winds over the right thigh. A jeweled girdle, its looped ends falling over the thighs, holds the edge of the garment in place, displacing it upward at the waist. A narrow sash falls from the left shoulder and flows over the contours of the body, marking a rise over the jewelry as well. The sacred thread follows this sash. Around the stomach is a jeweled belt similar in pattern to the girdle. Rings are worn at the wrists and elbow, the spiral armlets decorated with floral scrolls at front and back. There are three necklaces: a string of delicate beads gracing the neck, a collar with floral clasps decorated with ribbonlike tassels, and a plain neckband, which falls in a V-shape over the chest. A serpent with a rearing head is perched on the shoulder, a short tail rippling down the back of the arm. The two upper arms hold an axe and a leaping antelope, executed with great sensitivity. The left hand grants freedom from fear.

Śiva's face is majestic and dignified, the pupils of his eyes lightly incised. A large, circular earring fills a distended earlobe. The hair, twisted into the matted strands worn by ascetics, is elaborately arranged, piled high over the head and clasped at the base by a jeweled circlet. A band with floral ornament edges the forehead; it is secured at the back by a round lotus buckle. A long-stemmed flower is stuck into the hair above the left shoulder, a small flower pinned at the very top.

Little more than a girl, Pārvatī, the mother of the universe, raises a hand toward her face in a gesture of wonder and enchantment. She is shy and halting of step, and carries her slight body decked out in gorgeous bridal finery with all the awkward grace of a young Indian bride. Her legs are swathed in a soft material, which is tied at the waist by a simple girdle; below it a broad sash is wound around the hips. Jeweled chains worn over both shoulders cross between the breasts and at the back. Like Śiva, she also wears a string of beads close to the neck, a collar, and a plain neckband, which droops down to touch the small, full breasts. Her earrings are typically circular and large. The heavy coils of fine, wavy hair are wound into a magnificent chignon shaped like a figure-eight; it is secured by a triple string of beads tied to the coil at the back.



Śiva's marriage to Pārvatī is an event celebrated in myth, literature, and art. In the south, it takes on an intimate local aspect, for Śiva and Pārvatī are identified with Sundara, a youth, and Mīnākṣī, a princess of Madurai. Few representations can compare with the emotional expressiveness of this masterpiece. Śiva is masculine, confident, and assured; Pārvatī, who won her husband after undergoing fearful auster-

ities, is slim and tender, and at once as willing and reticent as any Indian bride. Inspired by an original vision, the creative sculptor breathed new life into conventional iconography. There is life, joy, and innocence in his poignant rendering of the divine as human and the human as divine.

The sculpture's modeling is in keeping with this mood, for it too is subtle and restrained. Supple contours add to the sense of quiet dignity. The details of ornament and jewelry are achieved with exquisite delicacy, the decorative forms softly embracing the smooth surfaces of the body. The painstaking preparation of the wax model and the skillful casting of the image are responsible for much of this liquid movement, the total effect being that of metal flowing in the mold rather than of the chisel carving out the forms.

The eyes of Pārvatī have been crudely re-outlined, and the antelope, though original to the image, has been reattached to the hand. The top half of the axe is a later restoration.

93

Dancing Śiva

Late tenth century
Kankalanatha Temple in Aliyur, Tamilnadu
Bronze, 113.7 cm. (44¾ in.)
Singaravelar Temple Collection, Sikkal
Literature: Nagaswamy 1983

THE LORD ŚIVA, who is identified with the Supreme Being, dances the universe into being, sustains it with his rhythm, and then dances it out of existence. This is the dance of bliss *(ānanda tāṇḍava)* celebrated in the scriptures. By witnessing its image and assimilating its meaning, the devotee receives reassurance and understanding, which free him from the fetters of this earthly life.

Śiva dances with one foot planted firmly upon the sprawling figure of a dwarf, who represents ignorance. His left leg is raised and pulled across his body so that it almost touches the encircling halo. The two upper arms are extended to the sides; the right hand holds a small drum, the left, a leaping five-pronged flame. Creation emanates from the reverberations of the drum even as the destruction of the universe arises from the searing heat of the flame. The ever-expanding universe takes form in the great halo, whose periphery is marked by flames resembling the one in Śiva's hand. The open palm of the raised right hand grants freedom from fear, while the downturned left hand points toward the raised foot, the refuge of the three worlds.

The simple jewelry consists of bells at the ankles and waist as well as the usual necklaces, armlets, and bracelets. Most pieces are executed in very low relief, which sets off the smooth surfaces of the body. One of the earrings is circular, the other shaped like a *makara*. The five locks of hair strung



together by flowers on each side of the head toss like waves over the shoulders. A tiny figure of Gaṅgā is perched on top to the right, reminding us that it was Śiva who cushioned the River's descent to earth from the heavens.

The springing step, the rippling contours of the legs and torso, the animated tempo of the arms, the swirling locks of hair, and the flickering clusters of fire all fill the sculpture with measured, stately rhythms that never betray restlessness. A calm stasis expressed in the quiet features of the smiling face transcends the swaying movement of this cosmic dance.

94

Rāma with His Wife Sītā and Brother Lakṣmaṇa

Mid-tenth century
Kalyanavaradaraja Temple, Paruthiyur, Tamilnadu
Bronze, 92.1 cm. (36¼ in.), Rāma; 67 cm. (26⅜ in.), Sītā; 92.1 cm. (36¼ in.), Lakṣmaṇa
Collection of the Kalyanavaradaraja Temple, Paruthiyur
Literature: P. R. Srinivasan 1963; Nagaswamy 1983

THE *Rāmāyaṇa,* the great Sanskrit epic, celebrates the life and works of Rāma, an incarnation of Viṣṇu. Among the events recounted are his struggle, with the aid of his brother Lakṣmaṇa, against the demons who had abducted his wife, and his ideal rule upon the earth. The epic was rendered in various Indian vernacular languages, Kamban's *Rāma-kathā* being the outstanding Tamil version.

Rāma stands on a lotus pedestal, the weight of his body poised upon the right leg while the torso sways to the left. His left hand is raised high, the fingers drawn back as if holding a bow; this gesture is complemented by the right hand, whose fingers are clenched together as though grasping an arrow. Lakṣmaṇa stands in an almost identical pose. Sītā, too, strikes a similar posture, but her right hand seems to hold a flower and her left hand hangs gently at her side. The jewelry of each figure is rich, but delicately rendered, and serves as a foil for the smooth forms of the body. At once precise and light, the patterns on their lower garments are in harmony with the texture of the ornament. The full faces are masterfully modeled, with elegant, handsome features of great majesty, and the craftsmanship is flawless.



Lakṣmaṇa



Rāma

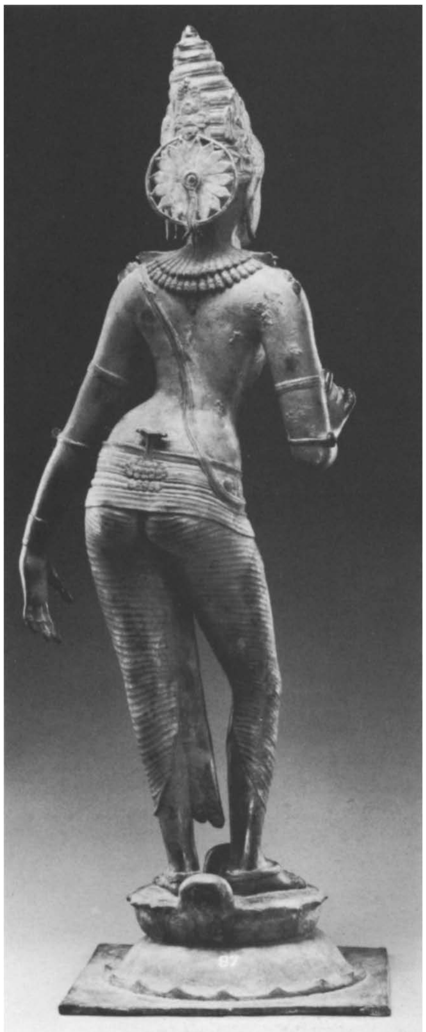


Sītā

95

Śiva Accompanied by Pārvatī

Dated A.D. 1011-12
Tiruvenkadu, Tamilnadu
Bronze, 104 x 49 x 26 cm. (41 x 19¼ x 10¼ in.), Śiva; 92 x 34 x 29 cm. (36¼ x 13⅜ x 11 7/16 in.), Pārvatī
Thanjavur Art Gallery, Thanjavur
Literature: Ramachandran 1956-57; Nagaswamy 1983



Pārvatī, back view

TIRUVENKADU, A VILLAGE near the mouth of the river Kaveri, is, according to local legend, the spot where Śiva danced in bodily form and slew the famous demon who had the temerity to cut off the horns and tail of the god's bull. A large number of bronze images have been recovered from this holy place of pilgrimage, three of which are shown in this exhibition (see also cat. nos. 96 and 97). The fine quality of these pieces would suggest that ancient Tiruvenkadu was for several centuries home to a great atelier of inspired artists.

This beatific sculpture depicts Śiva, accompanied by his consort, in the form he assumes when blessing his devotees with freedom from the chain of existence and the privilege of remaining forever in his presence. The god once rested his right hand on the hump of his now-missing bull. His body bends in a sinuous curve, hip outthrust, feet crossed, and left hand resting at the thigh. The short lower garment is secured by a belt richly carved with a leonine face *(kīrttimukha)* and crocodilian creatures *(makaras)* with floriated tails. In addition to the sacred thread and stomach band, the traditional necklaces and several simple bracelets and earrings adorn the figure. The most unusual feature is Śiva's coiffure, which consists of wavy locks wound around the head in the shape of a flat turban. Its complicated, swirling movement combines with the curve of the hip and the raised arm extending to the right to create a sense of space around the image.

The posture of Śiva's consort, whose hip bulges in a powerful curve as the weight of her body is shifted onto the left leg, helps relate the two separately cast images to one another. The close, restless folds of her lower garment reach to the calves, but the bend of her body and the confident pose of the right hand in the gesture of holding a flower impart a stately élan to the figure. Both Śiva and Pārvatī assume facial expressions that combine authority with tender concern.

The local Aghoramurti temple at Tiruvenkadu has two Tamil inscriptions. One of them, dated in the twenty-sixth year of the reign of Rājarāja I/A.D. 1011, records the gift of money and jewels to an image of Vṛṣavāhanadeva (Śiva with bull), established by a person called Kolakkavan in that year. Another inscription, of the next year (twenty-seventh year of the reign of Rājarāja I/A.D. 1012), records the manufacture and consecration of an image of Umā Parameś-



Śiva



Pārvatī



varī (Pārvatī). On grounds of style, it is almost certain that the images exhibited here are those mentioned in these inscriptions, so that we have two welcome additions to the extremely limited number of firmly dated bronzes from south India.

96

Portrait of a Devotee

Early eleventh century
Tiruvenkadu, Tamilnadu
Bronze, 67 x 25 x 21 cm.
(26⅜ x 9⅞ x 8¼ in.)
Thanjavur Art Gallery, Thanjavur
Literature: Nagaswamy 1983

THE STOCKY AND broad-shouldered devotee sways a little to the side and holds what appears to be a string of beads between his hands, which are folded at the chest in adoration. He wears a short lower garment, which clings to the full belly, a sacred thread, three strings of beads around the neck, and a bracelet of sacred berries *(rudrākṣa)*. His fine, wavy hair falls to the neck, the ends done in shallow ringlets. A small knot is visible just above the forehead.

This image is entirely plastic and tactile, the epitome of a concept of form present in all phases of Indian sculpture. Though the portrait is generalized, as is invariably the case with the few examples that have survived, it is nonetheless very expressive and of unique psychological sensitivity. The features reveal a man so profoundly moved as he communicates with the divine that he appears to be on the verge of tears.

97
Kannappan, the Devotee of Śiva

Early eleventh century
Tiruvenkadu, Tamilnadu
Bronze, 62 x 28 x 20 cm.
(24⅜ x 11 x 7⅞ in.)
Thanjavur Art Gallery,
Thanjavur 174

THE PRINCE OF a wild tribe, Kannappan was a simple devotee who, unaware of appropriate ritual, worshipped the *liṅga* emblem of Śiva in his own unorthodox way. Noticing once that an eye of the *liṅga* was bleeding, Kannappan gouged out his own healthy eye with an arrow to replace the injured one on the image. When the other eye of the *liṅga* also began to bleed, the devotee prepared to repeat his action. Pleased at this intense devotion, Śiva appeared before Kannappan to stop him from carrying out the deed and bestowed blessings upon him.

In this unique image the saint's body sways to the side in ecstasy and pain. He wears a short lower garment with a stiff leather apron edged in shells. Two chains of shells pass over the shoulders and cross at the chest and back. The feet are girded by slippers of thong leather. His hair, piled high on the head, is secured by a headband, also of shells. The pupil of one eye is marked, but the other eye is left blank; the gouged-out eye rests in the palm of the left hand, and the right hand is clenched, as if holding an arrow. Kannappan's lips are parted in pain, but his agony is controlled.



98
Kṛṣṇa Dancing on the Serpent Kaliya

Early eleventh century
Tamilnadu, exact provenance unknown
Bronze, 87.6 cm. (34½ in.)
The Asia Society, New York.
Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd Collection
1979.22
Literature: Lee 1970

AMONG KṚṢṆA'S FAMOUS exploits as a child at Vṛindāvana was the subjugation of Kaliya, king of the serpents, who had taken up the river Yamuna as his abode. When his poison began to affect the creatures living nearby, Kṛṣṇa sprang onto Kaliya's hood and danced on it until the exhausted serpent begged for mercy. Kṛṣṇa then spared Kaliya's life, but commanded him to return to the ocean, his original habitat.

Depicted in half-human, half-serpent form, Kaliya is on the verge of extinction, his serpent heads sinking, their mouths gasping for air. His human body is also prostrate; the head is raised limply, the hands folded in meek adoration as he prays for mercy. Having seized the serpent's winding tail in his raised left hand, Kṛṣṇa dances with his knees bent, one foot planted firmly on the serpent's hood, the other striking it with his toes. The right hand grants freedom from fear. Kṛṣṇa wears a short loincloth and the usual jewelry, including belled anklets, which are rendered here with crystalline sharpness, as is the main necklace. The tall coiffure consists of curled ringlets secured by a simple fillet with a looped ribbon in the center. The face is childlike and innocent, as though the heroic deed was merely play.



99

The Śaiva Saint Known as the Mother of Karikāl (Kāraikkal Ammaiyar)

Fourteenth century
Tamilnadu, exact provenance unknown
Bronze, 32.1 x 22.5 x 14 cm. (12⅝ x 8⅞ x 5½ in.)
The Nelson–Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri. Nelson Fund 33.533
Literature: Fickle 1983

A WOMAN FROM Karikāl, a village in Tamilnadu, was endowed with miraculous powers because of her ardent devotion to Śiva. When her husband, fearful of consorting with one considered to be a goddess, left her, the devotee asked Śiva to take away her useless beauty. Śiva granted her request, and the woman, assuming a skeletal form, devoted her life to the god, singing his praises to the accompaniment of cymbals. She went to live at Tiruvalangadu, the spot where Śiva outdanced the fearsome Kālī and then took her as his wife.

The saint is seated cross-legged on a rectangular pedestal. Her bony neck is sunken into her emaciated torso, which has pronounced wrinkles above the breasts and a clearly visible ribcage. The large head has a prominent nose, fanged teeth, and pointed ears. Her hair is combed back and cropped short at the neck, its ends pointed. In her long, poised hands, raised to breast level, she holds a pair of cymbals. The only item of dress is a lower garment covering the thighs.

The sinewy, elongated limbs, though bony, are smoothly rounded and modulated, so that the sense of death is alleviated to some extent. The body is held in a state of suspended animation, the face alert to the music that fills it with inner tension. The woman's intense absorption in Śiva has led to such a physical transmutation that the Mother of Karikāl has become one with the ghostly spirits who are the constant and devoted attendants of the great god (cf. cat. no. 100).

100

The Śaiva Saint Known as the Mother of Karikāl (Kāraikkal Ammaiyar)

Fourteenth century
Tamilnadu, exact provenance unknown
Bronze, 23.2 cm. (9⅛ in.)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Purchase, Edward J. Gallagher, Jr. Bequest, in memory of his father, Edward Joseph Gallagher, his mother, Ann Hay Gallagher, and his son, Edward Joseph Gallagher III, 1982. 1982.220.11
Literature: Pal 1977

THIS SCULPTURE IS a representation of the same saint as cat. no. 99. Here, however, her body is not as wiry, the emaciated form being endowed with a thin layer of flesh. This is in harmony with her smiling (rather than skeletal) face, radiant with ecstasy, which along with the body, sways gently to the relaxed rhythm of the music.

The Mother of Karikāl is seated on a rectangular pedestal, feet crossed, legs rocking; the movement abetted by the softly curving contours of the thighs. The handling of the torso hints at the rib structure beneath the skimpy flesh. Equally sensitive in its modeling is the bowed back with its straining spine.



cat. no. 99



cat. no. 100

ADDENDUM



A

Fragment of a Coping

Mid-second century B.C.
Bharhut, Madhya Pradesh
Plum-colored sandstone, 29 x 250 x 8.5 cm. (11⁷⁄₁₆ x 98⅜ x 3⅜ in.)
National Museum, New Delhi
Literature: Dwivedi 1974-75

The stupa, which in its simplest form consists of a spherical mound containing relics, is the primary monument of Buddhism, and its architectural history in India dates from at least the third century B.C. Many stupas were enclosed by a circular railing, which served to demarcate sacred space. Some were simple and unadorned while others were richly decorated. Of the latter, the earliest and most important discovery is the great railing once surrounding the stupa at Bharhut, datable to about the middle of the second century B.C. It was capped by a massive coping, decorated with a rhizome filled with large lotus flowers on one side and another rhizome on the other side, whose stems yield clothes, jewels, fruits, and scenes from the Buddha's life and Buddhist legends.

This fragment in two pieces depicts the hind part of a lion with a looped tail, followed by a kneeling elephant, from whose mouth emerges a stem, its first loop filled with necklaces. The four succeeding loops have elephants, each carrying a reliquary casket on its forehead and ridden by a man wielding a goad and a standard bearing attendants. Next are depicted two dancers, who are accompanied by female musicians playing drums, castanets, and a harp. They are welcoming the arrival of the relics with song and dance.

The wars that followed the appropriation of the Buddha's remains by the clan in whose territory he died and the subsequent, more equitable distribution of the relics is a recur-



cat. no. A

ring subject in early Indian sculpture. Presumably it is the same subject that is depicted here. The carving is typical of Bharhut; flat and cubic forms adhere at right angles to the bare ground, which asserts itself, despite the attempt made to fill vacant space with flowers and ornaments. The contours are angular and harsh, the movement puppetlike, and the details sharp and precise. The faces are solemn, the features masklike.

The top and bottom margins are missing as is the back. The slabs, cut off from the full coping, were found in the house of a local landlord at Bhatanward and recovered by Dr. V. P. Dwivedi of the National Museum.

B

Section of a Railing

Second century A.D.
Sanghol, Punjab
Spotted red sandstone, average measurement of posts, 96.5 x 18.5 cm. (38 x 7 15/16 in.)
Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Punjab, Chandigarh
1, 13, 22, 103, 108, 12, 10

Sanghol is an ancient site in Punjab that has yielded objects dating from the late Harappan culture (c. 2000 B.C.) to the twelfth century A.D. It also possesses important Buddhist remains, including a stupa and monasteries. A stone railing consisting of at least sixty-five pillars, four corner posts, copings and crossbars, and a few staircase balusters also once stood at the site. It was for some reason dismantled, stacked in a pit, and covered with earth, where it lay until it was accidentally discovered on 2 February 1985 by G. B. Sharma, archaeological officer, and his colleagues in the course of clearance operations. Both the spotted red sandstone and the style indicate that the works of art were

made in Mathura and then exported to distant Sanghol.

The section of railing displayed here consists of five pillars and a corner post secured by crossbars decorated with lotuses of varied design, and a coping. The pillars have an undressed base sunk into the plinth and tenons at the top for insertion into the coping. Three sockets have been sunk into each side to hold the crossbars. The reverse is carved with two half lotuses, one at the base and one at the top, between which are two full lotus medallions. The coping is decorated with arched ornaments *(candraśālā)* filled with motifs, including auspicious signs such as the *svastika,* flowers in a cup of leaves, and the full vase.

The principal attraction of the railing is the representation of Yakṣīs of a type common in the art of this period (cf. cat. nos. 9 and 10). Two of these show women standing on crouching dwarf goblins, each with a raised hand holding the branch of a tree. One lady reaches up to the branches, delicately picking a flower. She sways gently, hips curved and leg bent. Her braided hair has a heavy bunch of flowers at the end. Smooth undulating lines define the fluid contours. The hilly landscape is suggested by cubic forms. A cave with a lion's head is in the hills. The other Yaṣkī is associated with a flowering *aśoka* tree. Particularly striking is the dwarf beneath her feet. Another pillar depicts the familiar motif of the goose, who mistaking drops of water falling from the wet hair of a lady for pearls, opens his beak to swallow them. The lady has just finished her bath and is wringing her hair, her head gently tilted. Above her are the heads of an amorous couple, one of them damaged. Below, in a panel, is a winged lion.

Two other pillars are somewhat unusual in subject; one of them shows a standing man supporting a kneeling woman, who is probably intoxicated. The other is satirical and depicts a young woman riding on the back of an obese man with coarse and wrinkled features. The lady obviously is in full command.

The corner post is decorated on one face with a tapering pillar carrying the Wheel of the Law. The other face has a rhizome of *aśoka* leaves emerging from the mouth of a *makara*. In it is a goose and a crouching squirrel; both creatures are well observed and truthfully rendered.

The railing is an exquisite example of its type, the style a more intimate and playful version of the kind of work seen in the Yakṣī from Bhutesar (see cat. no. 10).



C

Addorsed Lions

Ninth–tenth century
Gwalior fort/Suhania(?), Madhya Pradesh
Buff sandstone, 51 x 106 x 34 cm. (20⅛ x 41¾ x 13⅜ in.)
National Museum, New Delhi
Literature: London 1949

THE SCULPTURE is not carved in the round. Its precise architectural function is unclear but it may have been the capital of a pilaster.

The animals are addorsed; only one lion is complete. Claws bared and backs arched, they cling to the pedestal as they look downward. Their open mouths reveal teeth; each has a protruding tongue that is carved in relief over the lower lip but not shown inside the mouth. The large whiskers curl over the snout, and the eyes, with arched brows, protrude boldly. The mane consists of circular curls around the neck and rows of tight ringlets that fall over the back. Tufts of hair are on the haunches and the front leg.

The animals are highly stylized but the sculpture conveys their great, pent-up power. The hesitant step as the front paws attempt to grip the smooth, sloping sides of the pedestal is rendered masterfully.

D

Woman and Monkey

Eleventh century
Khajuraho area, Madhya Pradesh, exact provenance unknown
Plum-colored sandstone, 88.5 x 26.3 x 27 cm. (34⅞ x 10⅜ x 10⅝ in.)
National Museum, New Delhi
75.430



THE WOMAN, her back to the viewer, turns to look at the monkey clambering up her leg. Her lower garment has come undone and slips down her waist, and she attempts to hold it up by clutching an end of the material. A long scarf twists around her body, its movement echoing the subtle modeling of the back and the roundness of the breast. Her agitated motion is further sustained by the waving, striped pattern of the lower garment and the flutter of cloth between her legs.

The sculpture once adorned the external walls of a temple, forming part of its rich texture. In works like these, the Indian artist is revealed in his creative aspect, exploring all the possibilities of form.

Acknowledgments

THE ORGANIZATION OF this representative exhibition of Indian sculpture, the most important since the London exhibition of 1947-48, presented great challenges, foremost among which were the collection of objects, often from very remote spots scattered throughout the subcontinent; their transportation, particularly in handling works of great size and weight; and, of course, their meaningful exhibition to the public. None of this would have been accomplished without the cooperation of a large number of people in India, Europe, and America, and to all of them I must express my most sincere thanks.

Beginning with friends and colleagues in India, the first to come to mind is Shrimati Pupul Jayakar, Chairman of the Indian Advisory Committee for the Festival of India, whose discernment and cooperation have always been available. Had it not been for her personal interest, several masterpieces would not have been on view; indeed, the existence of some would have been unknown. The courtesies extended by her staff, notably Shri S. K. Misra, Director-General; Dr. J. P. Das; Shri Vijay Singh, Coordinator; and Shri T. N. Malik, are too numerous to mention. Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan, Additional Secretary of the Department of Culture, Government of India, and Co-Chairperson of the Joint Museums Committee of the Indo-U.S. Subcommission on Education and Culture, both an administrator and a scholar, worked hard to make the exhibition a success despite its great demands on her time. I am also thankful to the director and the staff of the National Museum, New Delhi, and to the staff of the exhibition cell of the Festival of India attached to that institution; the precise terms of this acknowledgement are in keeping with the wishes of the director of the National Museum on whose shoulders, and also those of his staff, fell the arduous task of assembling the objects and arranging for their delivery to the United States.

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left page: cat. no. 59. *Avalokiteśvara*

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PRAMOD CHANDRA
George P. Bickford Professor of Indian and South Asian Art
Harvard University

Glossary



Note: Sanskrit names and terms appear in italics.

abhaya mudrā — The gesture of granting freedom from fear. The right hand is raised with the palm forward and the fingers pointing up. (See Intro., and cat. nos. 18, 27, 37, 61, and 80.)

Ajanta caves — A series of elaborately sculpted and painted excavations in a river gorge near the city of Aurangabad in western India. Some remains date from as early as the first century B.C., but most are from the fifth century A.D. (See cat. nos. 6 and 37.)

Āryan invasions — Successive waves of Indo-European peoples who emigrated to India in the second millennium B.C. They were essentially pastoral groups, and much is still unknown about their origins and development. Their hymns are the *Vedas*, the world's oldest scriptures. (See Intro.)

aśoka — A tree with bright red flowers. (See cat. nos. 9, 11, 38, and 83.)

Avalokiteśvara — A Bodhisattva of infinite compassion. He is an earthly manifestation of the Buddha who presides over the highest heaven. His attribute is a lotus. (See cat. nos. 30, 59, and 62.)

Bodhisattva — A being of great mercy and compasion who works for the welfare of all living things and who is destined to become a Buddha. First applied in Buddhist thought to incarnations of the historical Buddha, the term also came in later schools of Buddhism to mean a being who voluntarily turns away from ultimate bliss to assist other beings. (See Intro., and cat. nos. 14, 18, and 30.)

Brahmā — One of the three main gods of Hinduism. He is born from the navel of Viṣṇu and is the creator of the world. His prominence in the Hindu pantheon has diminished over time. (See cat. nos. 25, 48, 51, 80, and 90.)

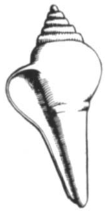
Brāhmī — An ancient Indian script that is probably the product of long development. The earliest known examples date from the third century B.C. (See cat. nos. 27 and 37.)

brahmin *(brāhmaṇa)* — A priest. The highest of the four main classes of Hindu society. (See cat. nos. 15 and 51.)

Buddha — Any being who has attained enlightenment. The term commonly refers to Siddhārtha Gautama, the historical Buddha. He was a prince of a Himalayan foothill tribe who renounced his family and the privileges of his birth to become a religious teacher in the late sixth/early fifth century

B.C. He rejected the extremes of asceticism for a moderate path to enlightenment called "the Middle Way." (See Intro., and cat. nos. 17, 21, 22, 27-29, 34, 37, 42, 61, 79, and 81.)

Buddhism — A religion based on the example and teachings of the historical Buddha. By about the first century A.D., innovative schools of Buddhist thought expanded to include a larger body of beliefs and practices derived from other sources. Both conservative and innovative forms of Buddhism spread from India to Ceylon, Southeast Asia, Tibet, central Asia, and east Asia. The religion declined in India, and by about the twelfth century A.D. was of little significance in the land of its birth.



Cāmuṇḍā — The goddess of death and destruction. She is one of a group of seven mother-goddesses. (See cat. nos. 43, 47, and 52.)

conch — A large shell that is one of the attributes of Viṣṇu. (See cat. nos. 43, 71, 80, 82, and 90.)

dhyāna mudrā — A gesture of meditation. The hands are in the lap, one on the other, palms facing up. (See cat. nos. 27 and 80.)



fly whisk — A whisk made of the tail of a yak that is carried by attendant figures. It is associated with divinity and kingship. (See Intro., and cat. nos. 4, 51, 71, 85, and 87.)

Gaṇeśa — The elephant-headed god who removes obstacles and is invoked at the beginning of activities. The son of Śiva and Pārvatī, he is a patron of letters and chief of his father's dwarf attendants *(gaṇas)*. His vehicle is the rat. (See cat. nos. 46, 48, and 71.)

Gaṅgā — The goddess who personifies the Ganges, principal river of north India. According to myth, the River originates in the heavens and comes to earth to wash away sin. The overpowering force of her fall is tempered by her passage through the matted locks of Śiva. Her vehicle is the *makara*. She and the river goddess Yamunā commonly flank the doorways of temples. (See cat. nos. 65 and 93.)

Garuḍa — A man-bird who is the vehicle of Viṣṇu. In some contexts he is solar in character and opposes the aquatic serpents, the Nāgas. (See cat. nos. 43, 53, 67, 80, and 89.)

Hayagrīva — A horse-headed demon who stole the *Vedas* while Brahmā slept. He was defeated by Viṣṇu, who assumes the horse-headed form himself to mark the victory. (See cat. no. 80.)

Hinduism — A relatively recent name for an ancient and complex system of beliefs, practices, and institutions of the Hindus, the principal inhabitants of South Asia with communities in other parts of the world. As a religion, it affirms the essential unity of various forms of the divine and takes the *Vedas* as the authoritative scriptures.

Indrāṇī — The consort of Indra, king of the gods. She is one of the seven mother-goddesses. (See cat. no. 43.)

Jainism — An Indian religion and philosophy founded at about the same time as Buddhism. It follows the teaching and examples of twenty-four religious teachers, the last of whom was its founder, and espouses the ethical doctrine of noninjury to living creatures. Jainism emphasizes asceticism and

monasticism as paths to human perfection. Once spread widely throughout much of India, it is strongest today in the western state of Gujarat. (See Intro.)



kīrttimukha — A grotesque ornament in the form of a lion head. The term was first used for the principal horseshoe arch of early temple façades. Later it was also applied to the faces (both human and leonine) placed within ornamentalized arch patterns and in other decorative contexts. (See cat. nos. 32, 56, 61, 62, 65, 90, and 95.)

Kṛṣṇa — Both god and hero, Kṛṣṇa is an incarnation of Viṣṇu. Born in the royal family of Mathura and brought up by foster parents nearby, he is probably the most popular divinity of modern Hinduism and is worshipped as divine child, lover, and teacher. (See cat. nos. 33, 87, and 98.)

Kubera — The dwarfish, fat, and jolly god who controls the wealth of the earth. (See cat. no. 12.)

liṅga — The phallic representation of Śiva. The *liṅga* can be a nonfigural representation, or can be combined with a figural depiction of the god. (See cat. no. 97.)



Māheśvarī — The consort of Maheśvara (Śiva) and one of a group of seven mother-goddesses. (See cat. no. 58.)

makara — A mythical, crocodilian creature associated with the Waters of Creation. The vehicle of the goddess Gaṅgā. The presence of a *makara* signifies the presence of water. *Makaras* are often used architecturally as water spouts. (See Intro., and cat. nos. 23, 24, 38, 48, 51, 57, 65, 67, 72, 74, 89, 90, 93, and 95.)

Mañjuśrī — The Bodhisattva who raises the sword of wisdom. (See cat. no. 55.)

mother-goddess — The cult of the Goddess is very ancient in India. She is identified primarily with the consort of Śiva and can be benevolent or destructive in function. In later Hinduism, the mother-goddess is the active female force that unleashes passive male power. Mother-goddesses are commonly depicted in a group of seven, all of whom may be regarded as aspects of the Goddess. (See cat. nos. 43 and 78.)



Nāga — A serpent. A class of handsome, serpentine divinities in Hinduism and Buddhism. Nāgas are generally associated with water. (See Intro., and cat. no. 80.)

Pārvatī — The wife of Śiva. She is a benevolent aspect of the Goddess and is of great beauty and grace. Her father is the personification of the Himalayas, and her name means "daughter of the mountains." (See cat. nos. 25, 39, 48, 56, 84, 92, and 95.)

Rāma — An incarnation of Viṣṇu. He is an example of moral excellence and purity of spirit. An epic hero whose exploits are narrated in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, he is still very popular in India today. (See cat. nos. 86 and 94.)

sacred thread *(yajña pavita)* — A cord of several threads (most often three) worn over the shoulder and passing over the chest and upper abdomen. It is received at initiation into adulthood by male members of the "twice-born" classes (priests, warriors, and agriculturists and merchants). (See cat. nos. 24, 30, 59, 62, 70, 88, 95, and 96.)

Sanskrit	The classical language of India. It is a member of the Indo-European language group. The name is an anglicized version of the word *saṃskṛta* which means "constructed." The language exhibits complex sound rules and grammar.
Śiva	One of the principal gods of Hinduism, Śiva is a divinity whose character is complex. He is at once destroyer and creater, ascetic and dancer. Śiva's dance expresses the circularity of time, for he dances the universe into and out of being. He is the embodiment of cosmic energy in all its forms. He is the union and resolution of opposites. (See cat. nos. 25, 35, 40, 48, 51, 56, 88, 90, 92, 93, and 95.)
stupa	A reliquary mound enclosing remains of the Buddha or Buddhist religious leaders. Stupas are pilgrimage sites and are often located at places associated with specific events in the life of the historical Buddha. Funerary in origin, they are also images of the cosmos. (See Intro., and cat. no. 7.)
Tamil	A south Indian language with a rich history and literary tradition. It is widely spoken in Tamilnadu, the southeastern region of the Indian subcontinent which is inhabited by peoples belonging to ethnic and linguistic groups distinct from those of northern India. Tamilian culture is part of a pan-Indian cultural expression, but exhibits significant regional variations and distinctions. (See cat. nos. 94 and 95.)
Tārā	One of a group of female saviors of later Buddhism. Analogous to the goddesses of Hinduism, they function as consorts and counterparts of Bodhisattvas. Tārā embodies the principle of grace and compassion and is the consort of Avalokiteśvara. She exists in many forms. (See cat. nos. 31, 54, and 60.)
tribhaṅga	A triple-bent posture of the body. The weight is thrown onto one leg resulting in three axes for legs, torso, and head. (See cat nos. 28 and 71.)
ūrṇā	A circular protuberance on the forehead of the Buddha between and above the eyebrows. A sign of Buddhahood. (See cat. nos. 42 and 61.)
uṣṇīṣa	One of the signs of Buddhahood. A cranial protuberance. Literally "turban," it is interpreted by different schools and periods of Indian sculpture as a topknot, a mound covered with coiled curls, or a chignon. (See cat. nos. 28 and 37.)
Vaiṣṇavī	A consort of Viṣṇu and one of a group of seven mother-goddesses. (See cat. no. 43.)
vajra	In Sanskrit, both "thunderbolt" and "diamond." The term generally refers to a ritual object that is most often a stem or handle with prongs at both ends. The *vajra* is an attribute of certain divinities and symbolizes that which destroys ignorance and is itself indestructible. (See cat. nos. 43 and 54.)
varadā mudrā	A gesture of bestowal of gifts and boons. The hand is lowered, the palm forward, the fingers pointing down. (See cat. nos. 43, 55, 59, and 60.)
Vārāhī	The boar-headed consort of Viṣṇu's boar incarnation and one of a group of seven mother-goddesses. (See cat. no. 43.)



Vedic — Pertaining to the peoples, culture, period, or scriptures *(Vedas)* of the Indo-European tribes whose migrations into India in the second millennium B.C. constitute the Āryan invasions. (See Intro., and cat. no. 40.)

vehicle — An animal ridden by a god or goddess as a means of conveyance. The presence of a vehicle is a sign of the presence of the divine. (See cat. nos. 48 and 90.)

Viṣṇu — One of the main gods of Hinduism, commonly called "the preserver," he is also the creator of the universe and is associated with its complete destruction. Viṣṇu has many earthly incarnations who come whenever necessary to combat evil. These include Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, and even the Buddha. The final incarnation is yet to come, whereupon the universe will be destroyed and the cycle will begin again. (See cat. nos. 24, 25, 48, 67, 80, 89, 90, and 91.)

Water Cosmology — The ancient concept at the base of Indian religious expression that characterizes water, beginning with the Primal Waters of Creation, as the source of all that exists. Water is the Formlessness that yields Form. Indian iconography associates all that is good and abundant with water, both implicitly and explicitly. The intellectual and symbolic unity of the Water Cosmology is described fully in the works of Ananda Coomaraswamy (see bibliography), who offers an interpretation of Indian artistic expression that transcends sectarian boundaries. (See Intro., and cat. nos. 72 and 74.)



Wheel of the Law — A common symbol of the Buddhist law *(dharmacakra)*. In the sermon he preached at Sarnath after his enlightenment at Bodh Gaya, the Buddha is said to have first "set the Wheel of the Law in motion." The wheel is an ancient Indian symbol with many associations, principally solar. (See cat. nos. 27, 28, and 79.)

Yakṣa (m)/*Yakṣī* (f) — Spirits presiding over the powers of nature whose cult is very ancient. They reward their favorites and punish those who displease them. Monumental, freestanding images of these beings are among the first representations in India of divine types in human form, and pass their rich symbolic and visual vocabulary to later anthropomorphic representations of the Buddha and Hindu divinities. First and still worshipped in their own right as popular divinities, Yakṣas were taken into both Buddhist and Hindu pantheons as attendants and demigods. They are associated with plenty. Some sacred writings identify them with the Supreme Being. (See Intro., and cat. nos. 4-7, 9-11, 72, and 83.)

Yamunā — A goddess and the personification of the river Jamuna that flows from the Himalayas through Delhi and Agra and joins the Ganges at Allahabad, a place of special sanctity. The land between the two rivers is the heartland of Hindu culture. Yamunā's vehicle is the tortoise. She and the goddess Gaṅgā often flank the doorways of temples. (See cat. no. 65.)

yoga — A philosophical school of spiritual discipline. The term is now used commonly to refer to a system of exercises practiced in Indian religion that were originally an integral part of spiritual control. The literal meaning of the Sanskrit word is "yoking, union." A practitioner of yoga is called a yogi. (See cat. nos. 27, 57, and 80.)

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